

NATIONAL EDITION

VICTOR HUGO

DRAMAS

[4]

OLIVER CROMWELL

TRANSLATED BY

I. G. BURNHAM



PHILADELPHIA: GEORGE BARRIE & SON

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THE DRAMAS
OF
VICTOR HUGO

OLIVER CROMWELL

HOLLAND PAPER EDITION

OF WHICH THERE HAVE BEEN PRINTED

1000 COPIES

No. 386

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OLIVER CROMWELL



G. D. B. 1840

L. H. 1840

CROWWELL

ACT FIRST SCENE X

THE CONSPIRATORS
PREFACE
RICHARD CROWWELL

I look you, my friends, to prove to you how little fear I have of being compromised with you, and to what point my thoughts and wishes coincide with yours; to prove how ready I am to love the cause which you love, or the goodwill of the public. It has not the advantage of having fallen under the gaze of the censorship, to attract the interest of the public opinion, nor the honor of having been formally rejected by an infallible tribunal. I think the heart of good King Charles the First the outset the sympathy of literary men of taste.

It presents itself therefore for the consideration of the public, like the infirm man in the Gospel, *solus, pauper, nudus*,—alone, poor and naked.

It was not without some hesitation that the author determined to burden his drama with notes and a preface. Those things are ordinarily a matter of utter indifference to the reader. They are more interested in a writer's talent than in his views; and whether a work be good or bad, it matters little to them upon what ideas it is founded, in what spirit it was conceived. We seldom visit the cellars of an edifice after inspecting its upper regions, and when we eat the fruit of a tree, we care but little about the root from which the tree sprung.

On the other hand, notes and prefaces are sometimes a convenient way of increasing the weight of a book, and of adding, in appearance at least, to the importance of a literary work; it is a bit of tactics not unlike that employed by a general who, to make his line of battle as imposing as possible, brings everything, even his baggage-train, to the front. Then, while the critics are venting their fury upon the preface, and the scholars upon the notes, it may happen that the main body of the work escapes them, and passes unhurt between their cross-fires, as



CROMWELL

ACT FIRST SCENE X

THE CONSPIRATORS

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Look you, my friends, to prove to you how little fear I have of being compromised with you, and to what point my thoughts and wishes coincide with yours; to prove how dearly I do love the cause whereon your fondest hopes do rest,

(He fills a glass and puts it to his lips.)

I drink the health of good King Charles!

PREFACE

The drama contained in the following pages has nothing to commend it to the attention or the goodwill of the public. It has not the advantage of having fallen under the *veto* of the censorship, to attract the interest of the various shades of political opinion, nor the honor of having been formally rejected by an infallible reading committee, to procure for it at the outset the sympathy of literary men of taste.

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the main body of an army extricates itself from a dangerous position, while the advance posts and rear-guard are engaged.

These considerations, momentous though they be, are not the ones which influenced the author in his decision. This volume was in no need of being *puffed out*, it was only too stout already. Again, and the author is at a loss to explain this fact, his frank, ingenuous prefaces have always served hitherto to compromise him with the critics rather than to protect him from them. Far from being staunch and loyal bucklers, they have played him the same scurvy trick that a uniform of unusual appearance plays upon the soldier who wears it in battle, by pointing him out to the enemy and thus making him a target for every bullet, no one of which it has the power to turn aside.

Considerations of another sort influenced the author. It seemed to him that, although it is true that we rarely visit the cellars of a building for amusement, we are not sorry now and then to examine its foundations. He abandons himself once more therefore to the wrath of the *feuilletons*, with a preface. *Che sara, sara*. He has never taken overmuch thought for the future of his works, and has but little dread of the literary *what-will-they-say-of-it*.

In the present discussion between the stage and the college, the public and the academies, some interest, perhaps, will attach to the words of a solitary *apprentice* of nature and truth, who has withdrawn from the literary world thus early from very love of letters, and who, in default of *good taste*, has good faith, in default of talent, conviction, in default of knowledge, capacity for study.

He will confine himself, however, to general reflections upon art without the slightest purpose to fortify his own work thereby, without pretending to write a prosecutor's address or a plea for mercy against or for any person or thing whatsoever. An attack upon or defense of his book is to him of less importance than to any other. And then personal contests are repugnant to him. It is always an unpleasant spectacle to see two men contending with their self-esteem for weapons. He protests in advance, therefore, against any interpretation of his ideas, any application of his words, saying with the Spanish fabulist:

Quien haga aplicaciones
Con su pan se lo coma.

It is a fact that several champions of "sound literary doctrines" have thrown down the gauntlet to him, in his profound obscurity a humble, imperceptible spectator of the strange affray. He will not have the fatuity to pick it up. In the following pages may be read such observations as he has to offer in answer to them; here are his sling and his stone, but others than he may, if they choose, throw them at the heads of these *classic* Goliaths.

That said, let us pass on.

Let us take for our starting-point a fact. Civilization, or to employ a term more precise, although of more extensive application, society, has not always occupied the earth. The human race in its entirety has grown, has developed, has ripened like any individual of us. It has been a child, it has been a man, and we are now viewing its imposing old age. Before the epoch which modern society has dubbed *ancient*, there existed another epoch which the ancients called *fabulous*, but which it would be more accurate to call *primitive*. Here then are three great epochs in civilization from its beginning to the present day. Now, as the

poetic art is always a pendant to society, let us try to form a judgment, from what we know of the latter, of the characteristics of the former in those three great ages of the world,—primitive times, ancient times, and modern times.

In primitive times, when man is just awaking in a world which is just born, poetry awakes with him. In presence of the marvelous sights which dazzle and intoxicate him, his first words are naught but a hymn. He is still so near God that all his meditations are ecstatic, all his dreams are visions. He pours forth his whole soul in song as he breathes. His lyre has but three strings, God, the soul, creation; but this threefold mystery enwraps everything, this threefold thought includes everything. The earth is still almost a desert. There are families but no nations; fathers, but no kings. Each race exists as it pleases; no property, no law, no clashing, no wars. Everything belongs to each and to all. Society is a community. It imposes no fetters upon the individual man. He leads that nomadic pastoral life with which all civilizations begin, and which is so well adapted to solitary meditation, to fanciful dreams. His acts and his movements are guided by circumstance. His thought, like his life, resembles a cloud which changes its shape and its direction according to the wind which impels it. Such is the first man, such is the first poet. He is young, he is a lyric poet. His religion consists in prayer, his poetic temperament finds expression in the ode. This poem, this ode of primitive times, is Genesis.

Gradually this period of the world's youth passes away. Growth and expansion are seen on every side. The family becomes a tribe, the tribe becomes a nation. Each of these groups of men collects around a common centre, and kingdoms are born. The social instinct succeeds to the nomad instinct. The camp gives place to the city, the tent to the palace, the ark to the temple. The chief men of these nascent states are still shepherds, but shepherds of nations; their pastoral staff already has assumed the shape of a sceptre. Everything begins to take a definite form. Religious rites regulate the office of prayer; dogma has laid hold upon worship. Thus priest and king share the paternity of the nation; thus theocratic society succeeds the patriarchal community.

Meanwhile the nations are beginning to press too closely upon each other. Their interests conflict: hence the crash of empires meeting, which we call war. They overflow upon each other; hence the migration of nations, travels. Poetry reflects these great events; from ideas it passes to things. It sings of past ages, of peoples, of empires. It becomes epic, it gives birth to Homer.

In truth, Homer dominates ancient civilization. In society, as then constituted, everything is simple, everything is epic. Poetry is religion, religion is law. The virginity of the first epoch is succeeded by the chastity of the second. A sort of impressive gravity is noticeable everywhere in private as in public morals. The nations have retained nothing of their wandering life save respect for the stranger and the traveler. The family has a fatherland, which is the centre of everything; there is the religion of the home, the religion of the tomb.

We say again that such a civilization can find expression in no other form than the epic. In giving expression to it the epic will assume divers shapes, but will never lose its distinctive character. Pindar is more priestly than patriarchal, his verse epic rather than

lyric. If the annalists, inevitable concomitants of this stage of the world's history, set about collecting traditions and begin to count the years, their labor will be thrown away, for chronology cannot expel poetry; history remains an epic. Herodotus is a Homer.

But it is in the old Greek tragedies that the universal tendency toward the epic form is most noticeable. The epic mounts the stage without suffering any loss in its gigantic, inordinate proportions. Its characters are still heroes, demigods, gods; its motives, dreams, oracles, fatality; its tableaux, funeral rites and combats. What the rhapsodists sing, the actors declaim, and that is the whole difference.

More than that. When all the action, all the spectacular portion of the epic poem have been represented upon the stage, the Chorus takes up what remains. The Chorus makes comments upon the tragedy, encourages the heroes, gives all necessary descriptions, calls and dismisses the daylight, rejoices, laments, sometimes furnishes the scenery, explains the moral meaning of the subject of the play, and flatters the audience. Now what is the Chorus, this curious character placed between the spectacle and the spectator, but the poet completing his epic?

The theatre of the ancients like their drama is a vast affair, pontifical and epic, if we may say so. It will contain thirty thousand spectators; the performance takes place in the open air, in the bright sunlight, and lasts throughout the day. The actors raise their voices, wear masks, increase their stature; they make themselves giants, to correspond with the parts they play. The stage is immense. It may represent at the same time the interior and exterior of a temple, a palace, a camp, a city. Vast panoramas are unrolled before us. We see—we cite from memory only—Prometheus on his mountain; we see Antigone at the summit of a tower looking for her brother Polynice in the enemy's army (*The Phœnissæ*); we see Evadne hurling herself from the top of a cliff into the flames where the body of Capaneus is burning (*The Supplices* of Euripides); we see a vessel sailing into port and landing upon the stage fifty princesses with their suite (*The Supplices* of Æschylus). There architecture, poetry, everything is of a monumental character. Antiquity exhibits nothing more impressive, nothing more majestic. Its religion and its history meet upon common ground in its theatre. Its leading comedians are priests, the scenes of its plays are religious ceremonies, national festivals.

One last observation, which will confirm what we have said as to the epic character of those times; in the subjects which it treats, no less than in the forms which it adopts, the tragedy is simply a repetition of the epic. All the ancient writers of tragedy take their plots from Homer. The same fables, the same catastrophes, the same heroes. All of them draw their inspiration from the Homeric stream. It is always the Iliad and Odyssey. Greek tragedy circles around Troy, like Achilles dragging the body of Hector.

But the age of the epic is drawing near its close. Like the society it represents, that form of poetry has worn itself out turning upon itself. Rome copies Greece. Virgil copies Homer; and, as if to close its existence in a manner befitting its fame, it expires giving birth to this last child.

It was time. Another era was about beginning for the world, and for poetry.

A spiritual religion, supplanting material, external paganism, makes its way to the heart of the ancient social fabric, slays it, and in the corpse of this decrepit civilization sows the seeds of modern civilization. This religion is complete because it is true : between its dogmas and its forms of worship lies true morality. First of all it teaches man that he has two lives to live, one fleeting, the other immortal ; one upon earth, the other in heaven. It shows him that, even as his destiny is twofold, so is he himself ; that there is within him an animal and an intelligent being, a soul and a body ; in a word, that he is the point of intersection, the link common to the two chains of beings who embrace all creation, material beings and incorporeal beings—the former, starting with the dust to arrive at man, the other, starting with man to end with God.

A part of these truths may have been suspected by certain wise men of ancient times, but their full, luminous, extended revelation dates from the Gospel. The pagan schools felt their way along in the dark, propagating falsehood as well as truth in their random journeyings. Some of their philosophers sometimes cast upon this or that object feeble rays of light which lighted up but one side of it, and made the darkness upon the other side more dense than before. Hence all the phantoms imagined by the ancient systems of philosophy. Naught but the divine wisdom could substitute a far-reaching, equally distributed light for all these flickering scintillations of human wisdom. Pythagoras, Epicurus, Socrates, Plato, are torches ; Christ is the bright light of day.

Nothing can be more absolutely material than the theogony of the ancients. So far is it from having ever thought, like Christianity, of the distinction between body and spirit, that it gives form and feature to everything, even to the essences, even to the mental faculties. In its world everything is visible, tangible, fleshly. Its gods require a cloud to conceal themselves from the eyes of mortals. They eat, drink, and sleep. They are wounded and their blood flows ; they are maimed, and lo ! they limp forever after. This religion has gods and demigods. Its thunderbolts are forged upon an anvil, and among other ingredients that enter into their composition are three rays of twisted rain, *tres imbris torti radios*. Its Jupiter holds the world hanging by a golden chain ; its sun rides in a four-horse chariot ; its hell is a vast abyss, the mouth of which géography indicates upon the map ; its heaven is a mountain.

Thus paganism, which kneads all its creations in the same clay, makes little of divinity and aggrandizes man. Homer's heroes are almost of the same stature as his gods. Ajax defies Jupiter. Achilles' prowess is equal to that of Mars. We have seen how Christianity on the other hand draws a sharp distinction between spirit and matter. It places a chasm between body and soul, a chasm between man and God.

At this time, in order to omit no material feature from the sketch we have rashly undertaken to draw, we will call attention to the fact that, with Christianity and by it, a new sentiment found its way into the popular mind,—a sentiment unknown to the ancients, but developed to a remarkable degree among the moderns,—a sentiment which is something more than solemnity, something less than sadness ; melancholy. And was it not natural that the heart of man, until then benumbed by forms of worship purely hierarchical and priestly, should awake, and feel springing to life within it some unfamiliar faculty, at the breath of a religion which is human because it is divine, of a religion which makes of the poor man's

prayer the rich man's wealth, of a religion of equality, liberty, charity? Might it not see everything in a new light, after the Gospel had shown it the soul lying back of the mind, eternity behind life?

Furthermore, at that same moment the world was undergoing such a complete revolution, that it was impossible that there should not be one in men's minds. Up to that time the catastrophes which befall empires rarely reached the heart of the people; kings fell, majestic personages vanished, and that was all. The lightning struck in the upper regions only, and as we have already pointed out, events seemed to succeed one another with all the solemn stateliness of the epic. As society was constituted in ancient times the individual was placed so low that, in order that he be made to suffer, adversity must be actually present in his family. Thus he knew little of misfortune outside of his domestic sorrows. It was an almost unheard of thing that public calamities should interfere with the tranquility of his life. But the instant that the civilization of Christianity was founded the old order of things was overturned. Everything was torn up by the roots. The events which were to demolish ancient Europe and build a new Europe upon its ruins, followed fast and incessantly upon each other's heels, and drove the nations on pell-mell, these into the light of day, those into the darkness of night. There was so much uproar and tumult throughout the world, that it was inevitable that some echo of it should reach the heart of the people. It was more than an echo, it was an answer. Man, taking thought to himself in presence of these vicissitudes among the great, began to take pity upon his kind, and to reflect upon the bitter ironies of life. This sentiment, which pagan Cato called despair, Christianity called melancholy.

At the same time was born the spirit of investigation and of curiosity. These great catastrophes were also great spectacles, impressive revolutions. There was the North rushing bodily upon the South, the Roman world changing its form, the last convulsions of a whole universe in the agony of death. As soon as that world was dead, what clouds of rhetoricians, grammarians, sophists, settled down, like flies, upon its immense corpse. They could be seen and heard in swarms buzzing about the putrefying mass. They vied with one another in scrutinizing, commenting and discussing. Each limb, each muscle, each fibre of the huge prostrate body was turned and twisted this way and that. Surely it must have been a great joy for these anatomists of thought to be able to make experiments on so large a scale for their maiden effort; to have for their first subject, a dead civilization to dissect.

Thus we see, appearing simultaneously, as it were holding out their hands to one another, the genius of melancholy and meditation, the demon of analysis and controversy. At one of the extremities of this era of transition is Longinus, at the other St. Augustine. We must be careful not to cast a disdainful eye upon this epoch, which contained in the germ everything that has since borne fruit,—upon this time, when the least important writers were, if we may be pardoned a somewhat trite, but expressive metaphor, fertilizing the ground for the harvest which was to follow. The Middle Ages were grafted upon the Lower Empire.¹

Behold then a new religion, a new civilization; upon this twofold foundation a new school of poetry must inevitably spring into life. Hitherto,—and we beg pardon for stating a conclusion which the reader must already have drawn for himself from what has been said above,—hitherto the purely epic muse of the ancients, following in this respect the old

polytheism and the old systems of philosophy, had studied nature in one phase only, pitilessly casting aside almost everything in art which fell short of its type of beauty ; a type magnificent in the beginning, but which toward the close became false, paltry and conventional, as always happens with that which is governed by a fixed system. Christianity leads poetry into the paths of truth. Like it, the modern muse will look at things with greater breadth of vision. It will feel that everything in creation is not *beautiful* from the standpoint of mankind, that the ugly exists beside the beautiful, the misshapen beside the graceful, the grotesque beside the sublime, evil with good, darkness with light. It will ask itself if the restricted, relative reasoning of the artist ought to prevail over the infinite, absolute reasoning of the Creator ; if it is for man to set God right ; if nature will be made more beautiful by mutilation ; if anything under heaven will be the better for having its marrow and its source of life taken from it ; if art has the right to cut in two, so to speak, man, life, creation ; if, in short, harmony is best secured by incompleteness. And thereupon, with its eyes fixed upon occurrences which are at the same time mirth-provoking and awe-inspiring, and under the influence of the spirit of Christian melancholy and critical philosophy to which we adverted a moment since, poetry will take a great step forward, a decisive step, a step which, like an earthquake shock, will change the whole face of the intellectual world. It will strive to do as nature does, to mingle in its creations, but without confounding them, light and darkness, the sublime and the ridiculous, in other words, the body and the soul, the animal and the intellectual ; for the point of departure of religion is always identical with the point of departure of poetry.

Thus we see a principle unknown to the ancients, a new type introduced in poetry ; and as a new element in the being modifies the whole being, a new form of the art is developed. The new type is the grotesque ; the new form is comedy.

And we beg leave to insist upon this point, for we have now pointed out the characteristic feature, the fundamental difference which, in our opinion, separates modern art from ancient art, the present form from the defunct form, or to use more vague but more popular terms, *romantic* literature from *classical* literature.

“ At last ! ” we seem to hear those people say, who for some time *have seen what was coming*, “ at last we have you ; you are caught red-handed ! So then you deem the *ugly* a type to be imitated, the *grotesque* an element of art ! But what of the graces ? what of the canons of good taste ? Do you not know that art should set nature right ? that we must *ennoble* it ? that we must *select* ? Did the ancients ever exhibit the ugly or the grotesque ? did they ever mingle comedy with tragedy ? The example of the ancients, messieurs ! And Aristotle. And Boileau. And La Harpe. Upon my word ! ”

These arguments are sound, no doubt, and are especially remarkable for their novelty. But it is no part of our rôle to refute them. We are not building up a system—God preserve us from systems ! We are stating a fact. We are a historian, not a critic. Whether the fact gives pleasure or the reverse, matters little : it is a fact ! Let us resume, therefore, and try to demonstrate that modern genius springs from the fruitful union of the grotesque type and the sublime—modern genius, so complex and varied in its forms, so inexhaustible in its creations, and in that respect diametrically opposed to the uniform simplicity of the genius of the

ancients: let us show that that is the point from which we must start to establish the real, radical difference between the two literatures.

It would not be strictly true to say that the grotesque type and the comedy were absolutely unknown to the ancients. Indeed such a thing would be impossible. Nothing grows without a root; the second epoch always exists in germ in the first. In the *Iliad*, Thersites and Vulcan furnish the comedy, one among the mortals, the other among the gods. There is so much that is true to nature, so much originality, in the old Greek tragedy, that a touch of comedy must sometimes creep in. For example, to cite entirely from memory, the scene between Menelaus and the portress at the palace (*Helen*, Act I.); the scene of the Phrygian (*Orestes*, Act IV.). The Tritons, the Satyrs, the Cyclops are grotesque creatures; Polyphemus is a terrifying example of the same class; Silenus is a grotesque buffoon.

But we can but feel that this part of the art is still in its infancy. The epic, which at this time impresses its form upon everything, weighs heavily upon it and stifles it. The grotesque in the poetry of the ancients is very retiring and always tries to hide his face. We see that he is not upon his own soil, because his nature is disguised. He dissembles to the utmost of his ability. The satyrs, the tritons and the sirens are hardly deformed. The Parcæ and harpies are hideous in their moral attributes rather than in their features; the Furies are beautiful, and are called *Eumenides*, that is to say, *gentle, kindly*. There is a veil of grandeur or of divinity over other grotesques; Polyphemus is a giant; Midas is a king; Silenus is a god.

Thus the comic element is almost imperceptible in the great epic whole of ancient times. Beside the Olympian chariots, of what account is the car of Thespis? Beside the Homeric colossi, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, what are Aristophanes and Plautus? Homer carries them away with him, as Hercules carried the pygmies, hidden in his lion's skin.

In modern creations, on the other hand, the grotesque plays an enormous part. It is to be found everywhere; on the one hand it creates the deformed and the horrible; on the other hand, the comic, the buffoon.

It surrounds religion with innumerable original superstitions, it surrounds poetry with innumerable picturesque fancies. It sows abundantly, in the air, the water, the earth, the fire, those myriads of intermediate beings which we find instinct with life in the popular traditions of the Middle Ages; it shows us the ghastly merry-go-round of the witches in the darkness; it gives satan his horns, his cloven feet, his bat's wings. It is this same grotesque type, which now casts into the Christian hell those hideous forms which the severe genius of Dante and of Milton will evoke, and again peoples it with the absurd figures, among which Callot, the burlesque Michel-Angelo, will sport. If from the ideal it passes to the real world, it there unfolds an inexhaustible supply of parodies of human foibles. Creations of its fancy are the Scaramouches, Crispins, Harlequins, grinning silhouettes of man, types altogether unknown to the stern-faced ancients, although they had their origin in classical Italy. Lastly, imbuing the same drama with the imagination of the North and the imagination of the South, it exhibits Sganarelle capering about Don Juan, and Mephistopheles crawling about Faust.

And how free it is withal, and how frank its bearing! how boldly it brings into prominence all those strange forms which the preceding age had timidly enveloped in swaddling-clothes! Ancient poetry, compelled to provide companions for the limping Vulcan, tried to

disguise their deformity by building them upon a colossal scale. Modern genius retains the myth of the supernatural Smiths, but treats it in a very different way and one which makes it much more striking; it changes the giants to dwarfs; of the Cyclops it makes gnomes. With the like originality of invention it substitutes for the somewhat commonplace Lernean hydra the various local monsters of our legends; the gargoyle of Rouen, the *gra-ouilli* of Metz, the *chair-sallée* of Troyes, the *drée* of Montlhéry, the *tarasque* of Tarascon; monsters of diverse shapes, whose uncouth names are in themselves a grotesque attribute the more. All these creations draw from their own nature that energetic, deeply serious quality from which the ancients seem sometimes to have recoiled. Of a certainty the Greek Eumenides are much less horrible, and consequently much less true, than the witches in *Macbeth*. Pluto is not the devil.

In our opinion a very novel and interesting book might be written upon the employment of the grotesque in art. It might show what powerful effects modern artists have obtained from this fruitful type, which is a favorite target for narrow-minded criticism even in our own day. It may be that our present subject will lead us ere long to call attention in passing to some features of this immense picture. We will simply say here that, as a glass through which to examine the sublime, as a means of contrast, the grotesque is, in our judgment, the richest source of inspiration that nature can throw open to art. Rubens doubtless so understood it when he chose to introduce in his delineations of royal pomp, of coronations and of gorgeous ceremonials, the hideous features of a court dwarf. This universal beauty, which the ancients solemnly spread over everything, is not without monotony; the same impression, repeated again and again, will fatigue the most indefatigable mind at last. Sublimity heaped upon sublimity offers little in the way of contrast, and we need a respite from everything, even from the beautiful. On the other hand the grotesque seems to make a sort of halting-place for purposes of comparison, a point of departure whence one continues onward and upward toward the beautiful with fresher and keener perception. The salamander gives birth to the water-sprite, the gnome embellishes the sylph.

It would be no less accurate to say that contact with the deformed has given to the sublime creations of modern artists a purer, grander, aye, a more sublime quality than is to be found in the beautiful creations of antiquity; and so it should be. When art is self-consistent, it guides everything much more surely to its goal. If the Homeric Elysium is very far from suggesting the ethereal charm, the angelic loveliness of the Paradise of Milton, it is because there is beneath the latter a hell far more horrible than the pagan Tartarus. Would Francesca da Rimini and Beatrix seem so enchanting under the hand of a poet who did not confine us in the *Tour dei Faim*, and force us to partake of the repulsive banquet of Ugolino? Dante would have less charm, had he less force. Have the fleshly naiads, the brawny tritons, the wanton zephyrs, the diaphanous grace of our sylphs and water-sprites? Is it not because the modern imagination does not fear to picture the ghastly forms of vampires, ogres, ghouls, snake-charmers and jinns prowling about in cemeteries, that it is able to endow its fairy creations with that incorporeal form, that purity of essence, of which the pagan nymphs fall so far short? The antique Venus is beautiful, and admirable too, beyond doubt; but what is it that imparts to the figures of Jean Goujon their graceful, ethereal,

weird delicacy? what is it that gives them that unfamiliar impression of vitality and grandeur, if not the proximity of the rough but powerful sculptures of the Middle Ages?

If the thread of our argument has not been broken off in the reader's mind by these necessary developments of our fundamental idea—developments which might be carried much farther—he realizes doubtless how wonderfully that germ of comedy, the grotesque, when taken up by the modern muse, expanded and multiplied, as soon as it was transplanted to a more productive soil than that of paganism and the epic. In the new poetry, while the sublime will represent the soul as it is, purified by Christian morality, the grotesque will play the part of the human animal. The first-named type, freed from all taint of impurity, will be endowed with everything that is beautiful and attractive; it must have the power to create some day a Juliet, a Desdemona, an Ophelia. The second type will take to itself everything that is ridiculous, ugly, inferior mentally or physically. In this partition of humanity and of creation, all the passions, the vices and the crimes will fall to its share; licentiousness, sycophancy, gluttony, avarice, perfidy, and hypocrisy will be its attributes; it will appear, at one time or another, as Iago, Tartuffe, Basile; as Polonius, Harpagon, Bartholo; as Falstaff, Scapin, Figaro. The beautiful has but one type; the ugly has a thousand. The reason is that the beautiful, humanly speaking, is form considered in its simplest aspect, in its most perfect symmetry, in its most absolute harmony with one organization. And so taken as a whole, though complete in its way, it is restricted as we ourselves are. What we call the ugly, on the other hand, is one detail of a great whole, which passes our comprehension, and which is in perfect harmony, not with man, but with all creation. That is why it constantly presents itself in new, but incomplete shapes.

It is an interesting study to follow the rise and progress of the grotesque in modern times. In the first place it is an invasion, an irruption, a flood; it is like a torrent which has broken through its dykes. In its infancy it traverses Latin literature which is dying out, leaves its mark upon Persius, Petronius, Juvenal, and leaves behind the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius. Thence it finds a foothold in the imagination of the new peoples who are making a new Europe. It abounds in the pages of the old chroniclers and romancists. We see its influence extending from south to north. It plays a part in the dreams of the Teutonic nations, and at the same time vivifies with its breath the admirable Spanish *romances*, the veritable Iliad of chivalry. For example, in the *Roman de la Rose*, it is the grotesque which thus describes an imposing ceremony, the election of a king:

Un grand vilain alors ils elurent,
Le plus ossu qu'entr'eux ils eurent.

It impresses its characteristic qualities more especially upon that wonderful architecture, which in the Middle Ages takes the place of all the arts. It leaves its brand upon cathedral fronts, frames in ogive door-ways its scenes from purgatory, paints them in flaming colors upon church windows, displays its monsters and demons around capitals, along friezes, and on the edges of roofs. It appears in countless shapes upon the wooden façades of houses, upon the stone façades of châteaux, upon the marble façades of palaces. From the arts it passes into manners; and while it presents the *Graciosos* of comedy to be applauded by the

people, it presents kings with court jesters. Later, in the age of etiquette, it will exhibit Scarron sitting upon the edge of Louis XIV.'s couch. Meanwhile it inspires the science of heraldry, and draws upon the shields of the knights-errant the symbolic designs of feudalism. From the manners it finds its way into the laws; a thousand strange customs attest its presence in the institutions of the Middle Ages. Just as it made Thespis, besmeared with wine-lees, leap in her tumbril, it dances with the clerks of the basoche upon that famous marble table which served as a stage for the popular farces and for the royal banquets. At last, having gained admission into the arts, the manners and the laws, it makes its way even into the church. We see it, in every Catholic city, commanding some one of those strange ceremonials, those extraordinary processions, in which religion is attended by every form of superstition, the sublime surrounded by every form of the grotesque. To depict it with a single stroke of the pen, such was its vigor, its creative power, in those days of the dawn of literature, that at the outset, upon the threshold of modern poetry it produced three burlesque Homers: Ariosto, in Italy; Cervantes, in Spain; Rabelais, in France.

It would be supererogatory to say more of the influence of the grotesque upon the third period of civilization. Everything tends to show its close and creative alliance with the beautiful in what is called the *romantic* epoch. Even among the most innocent popular legends there is not one which does not in one way or another, as it were instinctively, furnish a solution of this mystery of modern art. Antiquity would not have conceived *The Beauty and the Beast*.

It is unquestionably true, that at the time at which we have arrived the predominance of the grotesque over the sublime in literature is clearly marked. But it is a fever of reaction, an eager longing for novelty, which soon passes; it is the first flood, which gradually subsides. The type of the beautiful will soon resume its rôle and reassert its right, which is, not to exclude the other type, but to prevail over it. It is time that the grotesque should be content to have a corner of the picture to itself in the royal frescoes of Murillo, in the sacred pages of Veronese; to be introduced in the two magnificent *Last Judgments* in which the art of every age will take a just pride, in that scene of enchantment and horror, with which Michel-Angelo will enrich the Vatican—in those terrifying representations of the fall of man which Rubens will hurl along the arches of the cathedral of Antwerp. The moment has arrived when equilibrium between the two principles is to be established. A man, a king of poets, *poeta sovrano*, as Dante says of Homer, is to reconcile everything. The two rival genii combine their twofold flame, and therefrom issues Shakespeare.

We have now attained the culminating point of modern poetry. Shakespeare is the Drama; and the drama, which combines in one breath the grotesque and the sublime, the terrible and the absurd, tragedy and comedy, is the salient characteristic of the third epoch of poetry, of the literature of to-day.

Thus, to sum up briefly the facts we have noticed thus far, poetry has three periods, each of which corresponds to an epoch of civilization: the ode, the epic, the drama. Primitive times are lyric, ancient times are epic, modern times are dramatic. The ode sings of eternity, the epic imparts solemnity to history, the drama depicts life. The characteristic of the first form is innocence, of the second simplicity, of the third truth. The rhapsodists mark the

transition from the lyric to the epic poets, as do the romancists from the epic to the dramatic poets. Historians come into being with the second epoch; chroniclers and critics with the third. The personages of the ode are colossi,—Adam, Cain, Noah; those of the epic are giants,—Achilles, Atreus, Orestes; those of the drama are men,—Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello. The ode lives upon the ideal, the epic upon the grandiose, the drama upon the real. Lastly this threefold poetry flows from three great springs: The Bible, Homer, Shakespeare.

Such then are the various aspects of thought in the three eras of mankind and society. Such are its three faces, in youth, in manhood, in old age. If we examine the literature of one country by itself or all literatures in a body, we always arrive at the same result; the lyric poets before the epic, the epic poets before the dramatic. In France, Malherbe before Chapelain, Chapelain before Corneille; in ancient Greece, Orpheus before Homer, Homer before Æschylus; in the first book, Genesis before Kings; Kings before Job; or to recur to the scale of all poetical forms which we ran over a moment since: the Bible before the Iliad, the Iliad before Shakespeare.

In a word, civilization begins by singing of what it dreams, then tells of what it does, and lastly undertakes to paint what it thinks. It is, let us observe in passing, for this last reason that the drama, combining as it does the most opposite qualities, may be at one and the same time profound and transparent, philosophical and picturesque.

It would be proper to add here, that everything in nature and in life passes through these three phases, the lyric, the epic and the dramatic, because everything is born, lives and dies. If it would not be absurd to compare the fantastic flights of the imagination with the stern deductions of the reason, a poet might say that sunrise, for example, is a hymn, noon-day a brilliant epic, and sunset a dismal drama which portrays the struggle between night and day, between death and life. But that would be poetry, folly perhaps, and *what does it prove?*

Let us cling to the facts marshaled above, and let us complete them by an important observation; namely, that we have by no means undertaken to assign to the three epochs of poetry an exclusive domain, but simply to point out the more prominent characteristics of each.

The Bible, that divine lyric monument, contains, as we hinted a moment since, an epic and a drama in germ; the Book of Kings and Job. Throughout the Homeric poems one is conscious of a reminiscence of the lyric, and a foreshadowing of the drama. The ode and the drama meet in the epic. In everything, everything exists; but there is in each object one generative element which imparts its own character to the whole.

The drama is poetry full grown. The ode and the epic contain it only in the germ; it contains them both in full development, and epitomizes both. Certes, the man who said: "*The French have not the epic brain,*" said a true and a clever thing; if he had said, "*the moderns,*" the clever saying would have become a profound saying. It is incontestable, however, that the genius of the epic predominates in that marvelous *Athalie*, so lofty in conception, and so simply sublime that the royal age failed to grasp its meaning. It is certain, too, that the series of historical Shakespearian dramas affords a noble illustration of the epic. But lyric poetry, above all others is adapted for the drama; it never embarrasses it, conforms

to all its caprices, easily adapts itself to all its forms, now sublime as in Ariel, now grotesque as in Caliban. Our era, dramatic before all else, is by that same token eminently lyric. It is because there is more than one bond of sympathy between the beginning and the end; the setting of the sun presents some of the same features as its rising; the old man becomes a child again. But this second childhood does not resemble the first; it is as sad as the other is joyous. It is the same with lyric poetry. Dazzling and dreamy at the dawn of civilization, it reappears, melancholy and pensive, at its decline. The Bible opens cheerily with Genesis, and closes with the threatening Apocalypse. The modern ode is still inspired, but is no longer ignorant. It meditates more than it contemplates; its reverie is melancholy. We see, by its offspring, that this muse is mated with the drama.

To make more clear by an illustration the thoughts we have ventured to put forth, we will compare the lyric poetry of primitive times to a tranquil lake which reflects the clouds and the stars; the epic is the river which flows therefrom, and hurries on, reflecting the forests, fields and cities on its banks, to fall at last into the ocean of the drama. Like the lake, the drama reflects the sky, like the stream it reflects its shores; but it alone has boundless depths and fierce tempests.

The drama therefore is the goal to which all modern poetry tends. *Paradise Lost* is a drama first of all, before it is an epic. As we know, it first presented itself to the poet's imagination under the first of these forms, and as a drama it always remains impressed upon the reader's memory, so prominent is the former dramatic frame-work still, under the epic edifice of Milton! When Dante Alighieri completed his immortal *Inferno*, when he had closed its doors and naught remained for him to do but to give his work a name, the instinct of his genius showed him that this multiform poem is an emanation of the drama, not of the epic; and upon the frontispiece of that monumental masterpiece, he wrote with his pen of bronze the words: *Divina Commedia*.

We see then that the only two poets of modern times who can be classed with Shakespeare emphasize his unity. They concur with him in imparting a dramatic tinge to all our poetry; like him they present a combination of the grotesque and the sublime; and, far from standing by themselves in the great literary whole which rests upon Shakespeare, Dante and Milton are in some sort the abutments of the edifice of which he is the central pillar, the buttresses of the arch of which he is the keystone.

We beg leave to repeat at this point certain ideas already put forth, but which need to be insisted upon. We have reached our first goal, and now we must set out again.

On the day when Christianity said to man: Thou art twofold, thou art composed of two beings, the one perishable, the other immortal, the one fleshly, the other ethereal, the one enslaved by appetites and passions, the other borne aloft upon the wings of enthusiasm and reverie; in a word, the one forever bending down toward the earth, its mother, the other constantly darting up toward heaven, its fatherland—on that day the drama was created. Is it, after all, anything more than the contrast we see every day, the never-ceasing conflict between two antagonistic principles which are always present in life, and dispute for the possession of man from the cradle to the tomb?

The poetry born of Christianity, the poetry of our time, is therefore the drama; the characteristic of the drama is the real; the real results from the natural combination of two

types, the sublime and the grotesque, which meet in the drama, even as they meet in life and in the creation. For true poetry, complete poetry, consists in the harmony of contraries. It is time, therefore, to proclaim aloud,—and in this matter above all others is it true that exceptions prove the rule,—everything that exists in nature exists in art. Upon taking one's stand upon this theory to judge our petty conventional rules, to extricate one's self from the labyrinths of scholasticism, to solve the trivial problems which the critics of the last two centuries have laboriously constructed about art, one is impressed by the promptitude with which the question of the modern stage straightens itself out. The drama has but to take one step to break all the spider's webs with which these Lilliputian warriors supposed that they had bound it fast in its sleep.

And so let addle-pated pedants (the terms are not incompatible) insist that the deformed, the ugly, the grotesque ought never to be copied in art; the answer is that the grotesque is comedy, and that comedy apparently forms a part of art. *Tartuffe* is not handsome, *Pourceaugnac* is not noble; but *Pourceaugnac* and *Tartuffe* are admirable bits of art.

If, driven back from this intrenchment to their second line of redoubts, they renew their prohibition of the grotesque, as allied to the sublime, of comedy fused with tragedy, they must be made to see that, in the poetry of Christian peoples, the first of these two types represents the animal part of man, the second the soul. These two stems of art, if their branches are prevented from mingling, if they are systematically kept apart, will produce no other fruit than, on the one hand, abstract vices and absurdities, on the other hand abstract crime, heroism and virtue. The two types, thus held asunder and left to their own resources, will go each its own way, leaving the real between them, at the right hand of one, at the left hand of the other. Whence it follows that after these abstractions there will remain something to represent,—man: after these tragedies and comedies, there will remain something to create—the drama.

In the drama, as it may be conceived at least, if not executed, all the parts cohere and everything happens as in real life. The body plays its part as well as the soul; and men and events, set in motion by this twofold agency, pass across the stage, burlesque and terrible by turns, sometimes burlesque and terrible at the same time. Thus the judge will say: "To the gallows with him, and let us go to dinner!" In like manner the Roman Senate will deliberate concerning Domitian's turbot. Again, Socrates, as he drinks the hemlock and discourses of the immortal soul and a single god, will break off to order a cock to be sacrificed to *Æsculapius*. Elizabeth will swear and talk Latin. Richelieu will wear the yoke of Joseph the Capuchin, and Louis XI. that of his barber, Master Olivier le Diable. Cromwell will say: "I have Parliament in my bag and the king in my pocket"; or, with the hand which signed Charles I.'s death-warrant, he will besmear with ink the face of a regicide, who will gleefully return the compliment. So Cæsar in his triumphal car will be afraid of overturning. For men of genius, howsoever great they be, have always in their make-up a strain of the animal, which makes sport of their intelligence. In that respect they are akin to the generality of mankind, for in that they are dramatic. "From the sublime to the ridiculous is but a step," said Napoleon, when he was convinced that he was a man and

nothing more; and that flash from a fiery soul just opening to the light, illumines art and history at once; that cry of anguish is an epitome of the drama and of human life.

It is a striking fact that these same contrasts are met with in the poets themselves, considered as men. By dint of meditating upon existence, of laying stress upon the bitter irony of it, of pouring forth sarcasm and mockery in floods upon our infirmities, these men who make us laugh so heartily become profoundly sad. This Democritus is a Heraclitus too, Beaumarchais was morose, Molière was dismal, Shakespeare melancholy.

We insist then that the grotesque is one of the supreme beauties of the drama. It is not a convenience simply, it is oftentimes a necessity. Sometimes it appears in homogeneous masses, in characters which are grotesque and nothing else, as Dandin, Prusias, Trissotin, Brid'oison, and Juliet's nurse; sometimes impregnated with terror, as Richard III., Bégears, Tartuffe, Mephistopheles; sometimes, too, with a veil of charm and refinement, as Figaro, Osric, Mercutio, Don Juan. It creeps in everywhere, for just as the most commonplace minds rise oftentimes to sublime heights, so do the greatest frequently pay tribute to the trivial and the ridiculous. Thus, often impalpable, often imperceptible, it is always present on the stage, even when it is silent, even when it hides its head. It does away with all thought of monotony. Sometimes it injects laughter, sometimes horror into tragedy. To it we owe the meeting between Romeo and the apothecary, Macbeth and the witches, Hamlet and the gravediggers. Sometimes it may, without producing a discordant note, as in the scene between King Lear and his fool, mingle its shrill voice with the most sublime, the most melancholy, the dreamiest music of the soul.

That is what Shakespeare alone has had the genius to do, in a fashion of his own, which it would be useless to attempt to imitate—Shakespeare, the deity of the theatre, in whom the three characteristic geniuses of our own stage, Corneille, Molière and Beaumarchais, seem united, three persons in one.

We see how quickly the arbitrary distinction of species vanishes when brought face to face with reason and good taste. It would be no less easy to destroy the pretended rule of the two unities. We say two and not *three* unities, because the unity of action, or uniformity, the only true and well founded one, was long ago left out of the controversy.

Distinguished contemporaries of this and other nations have already attacked, both in practice and theory, this fundamental law of the pseudo-Aristotelian code. Indeed, the combat should not be a long one. At the very first blow it cracked, so worm-eaten was this beam of the old scholastic hovel!

The most extraordinary thing is that the slaves of routine claim to support their rule of the two unities upon probability, whereas the real is the very thing that demolishes it. And indeed what could be more improbable and more absurd than this or that vestibule, peristyle, or ante-chamber,—dreary places where our tragedies obligingly unfold themselves; whither conspirators come, no one knows whence, to declaim against the tyrant, or the tyrant to declaim against the conspirators, each in his turn, as if they had said to themselves, like the clowns they are:

Alternis cantemus; amant alterna Camenæ.

Where did one ever see a vestibule of that description? What could be more opposed—we will not say to truth, for the scholasticists are very lavish with that—but to probability? The result is that whatever is too characteristic, too private, too closely connected with a particular locality, to take place in the ante-chamber or the public square, that is to say, the whole of the drama, takes place behind the scenes. We see upon the stage only the elbows of the action, so to speak; its hands are elsewhere. Instead of scenes we have narratives; instead of tableaux, descriptions. Solemn-faced characters stationed, like the old Chorus, between the drama and ourselves, tell us what is taking place in the temple, in the palace, in the public square, so that oftentimes we are tempted to cry out:—“Indeed! pray take us thither! That must be very entertaining, a beautiful sight!”—To which they would reply, no doubt:—“It is possible that it would interest or amuse you, but that isn’t the question; we are the guardians of the dignity of the French Melpomene.”—God save the mark!

“But,” some one will say, “this rule which you cast aside is borrowed from the Greek stage.” Wherein, I pray to know, do the Greek stage and drama resemble our own? Moreover, we have already shown that the vast extent of the ancient stage made it possible to embrace a whole neighborhood, so that the poet could, as the plot required, transport the action from one part of the stage to another, which was equivalent to so many changes of scene. A curious contradiction! the Greek theatre, restricted as it was to the furtherance of a national and religious object, is much freer than our own, which is, however, devoted solely to the entertainment, and, if you please the instruction of the spectator. The explanation is that the one obeys only those laws which are peculiar to itself, while the other takes to itself attributes which are absolutely foreign to its essence. One is artistic, the other artificial.

We are beginning to realize in our day that exactness in the matter of locality is one of the most essential elements of reality. The speaking or acting characters are not the only ones who leave a faithful impression of the facts upon the mind of the spectator. The place where this or that catastrophe occurred is an incorruptible and convincing witness to the catastrophe; and the absence of this species of silent character would render incomplete upon the stage the grandest scenes of history. What poet would dare murder Rizzio elsewhere than in Mary Stuart’s chamber? to stab Henri IV. elsewhere than in Rue de la Ferronnerie, blocked up with drays and carriages? to burn Jeanne d’Arc elsewhere than in the Old Market? to dispatch the Duc de Guise elsewhere than at the Château of Blois where his ambition stirred a popular assembly to frenzy? to behead Charles I. and Louis XVI. elsewhere than in those ill-omened squares whence Whitehall and the Tuileries can be seen, as if their scaffolds were appurtenances of their palaces?

The unity of time rests on no firmer foundation than the unity of place. Forcibly to confine the action of a play within twenty-four hours is as absurd as to confine it within the narrow limits of a vestibule. Every plot has its proper duration no less than its proper locality. How absurd to dole out the same length of time for every event! to apply the same measure to everything! We should laugh at a cobbler who would fit the same shoe to every foot. What shall we say of the idea of crossing unity of time and unity of place like the bars of a cage, and pedantically forcing to enter the cage thus formed, in the name of Aristotle, all the facts, all the peoples, all the figures which Providence sets before us in such

vast masses in real life? It is downright mutilation of men and things! it is forcing history to make wry faces! Let us say rather that they will all die in the operation; and thus the dogmatic mutilators will attain the same results as always; that which was instinct with life in the chronicle is dead in the tragedy. That is why it very often happens that the cage of the unities contains naught but a skeleton.

And then, if twenty-four hours can be comprised in two, it follows logically that forty-eight may be comprised in four. In that case the unity of Shakespeare will not be the unity of Corneille. More's the pity!

But these are the paltry quibbles which genius has had to put up with for two centuries past at the hands of mediocrity, envy and routine! In this way has the flight of our greatest poets been checked. With the scissors of the unities have their wings been clipped. And what has been given us in exchange for the eagle's feathers stolen from Corneille and Racine? Campestron.

We can imagine what will be said. "A too frequent change of scene tends to confuse and fatigue the spectator, and to produce a dazed condition of his mind; it may happen also that repeated transitions from one place to another, from one time to another, demand explanations which detract from the interest; care must be taken also not to leave gaps in the midst of a plot which prevent the different parts of the drama from adhering closely, and which also tend to confuse the spectator because he does not know what there may be in these empty spaces." But those are precisely the difficulties with which art has to contend. Those are the obstacles peculiar to this or that subject, as to which it would be impossible to pass judgment once for all. It is for genius to overcome, not for would-be poets to evade them.

To demonstrate conclusively the absurdity of the rule of the two unities, it would be enough to evoke another argument, taken from the very bowels of the art. We refer to the existence of the third unity, the unity of action, the only one universally admitted, because it results from the fact that the human eye and the human mind can grasp but one thing at one time. This one is as necessary as the others are useless. This it is which marks the perspective of the drama, and by that very fact it excludes the other two. There can no more be three unities in the drama than three horizons in a picture. We must be careful, however, not to confound the unity of action with simplicity of action. The unity of the whole in no way interferes with the secondary motives upon which the main action rests. It is essential only that these parts, skillfully kept in subordination to the whole, should constantly gravitate toward the main action, and group themselves about it at the different stages of the drama, or rather in connection with its various motives. The unity of the whole is the law of perspective of the stage.

"But," the customs officers of thought will cry, "great geniuses have always submitted to these rules which you disdain!"—True, unfortunately! But what would those admirable men have done, had they been left to themselves? Look and see how Pierre Corneille, tormented from the very first for that marvelous production, *Le Cid*, struggled under the combined weight of Mairet, Claveret, D'Aubignac, and Scudéri! how he denounces to posterity the violence of these men, who, he says, have made themselves *all white with Aristotle!* Look and see how they say to him—and we cite from the text of the time:—

"Young man, you must learn before you undertake to teach, and unless one is a Scaliger or a Heinsius, that is not endurable!" Thereupon Corneille rebels, and asks if their purpose is to place him "much below Claveret's level?" At this point Scudéri waxes wroth at such an exhibition of pride, and reminds "the thrice great author of the *Cid* of the modest words with which Tasso, the greatest man of his age, began his apology for the finest of all his works against what was perhaps the harshest and most unjust censure ever put forth. M. Corneille," he adds, "shows in his answers that he is as far from possessing the moderation as the merit of that most excellent author." The *young man* so *justly* and *gently censured* ventured to resist, whereupon Scudéri returns to the charge; he summons to his assistance the *Eminent Academy*;—"Pronounce, O MY JUDGES, a decree worthy of your renown, and which will prove to all Europe that the *Cid* is not the chef-d'œuvre of the greatest man in France, but the least judicious production of M. Corneille himself. You are called upon to do it, both for your own renown in particular, and for the renown of our nation in general, which is deeply interested in the matter; for foreigners who might chance to see this noble masterpiece, and who have had Tassos and Guarinis of their own, would think that our greatest masters are but apprentices."

These few instructive lines embody the tactics which jealous routine has from time immemorial resorted to as against rising talent—tactics which are followed in our own day, and which added so interesting a page to the early productions of Lord Byron. Scudéri gives us their very quintessence. In like manner the previous works of a man of genius are always preferred to the new, in order to prove that he deteriorates instead of improving; *Mélite* and *La Galerie du Palais* placed above *Le Cid*. Again, the names of the dead are always thrown in the teeth of the living; Corneille stoned with Tasso and Guarini (Guarini!) as later Racine, will be stoned with Corneille, Voltaire with Racine, and as every genius who shows his face to-day is stoned with Corneille, Racine and Voltaire. These tactics, as we see, are played out, but still they must have merit, for they are still resorted to. However, the poor devil of a great man still lived. Here we must pause to admire the way in which Scudéri, the bully of this tragi-comedy, driven into his intrenchments, hustles and abuses him, how pitilessly he unmasks his classical artillery, how he "proves" to the author of *Le Cid*, "what episodes should be, according to Aristotle, who tells us in the tenth and sixteenth chapters of his Art of Poetry;" how he overwhelms Corneille in the name of this same Aristotle, "in the twentieth chapter of his Art of Poetry, wherein *Le Cid* is condemned;" in the name of Plato, "in the tenth book of his Republic;" in the name of Marcellinus, "in his twenty-seventh book;" in the name of "the tragedies of *Niobe* and *Jephtha*;" in the name of "the *Ajax* of Sophocles;" in the name of "the example of Euripides;" in the name of "Heinsius, in the sixth chapter of the *Constitution of Tragedy*, and the younger Scaliger in his poems;" and lastly, in the name of "the Canonists and Jurisconsults (*au titre des Noces*)."
The first arguments were addressed to the Academy, the last one of all was aimed at the Cardinal. After the pin-pricks, the club. A judge was needed to decide the question. Chapelain decided it. Corneille therefore found himself convicted, the lion was muzzled, or, as was said at the time, the crow (*corneille*) was plucked. Now comes the deplorable side of this grotesque drama; having been thus foiled at his first cast, this thoroughly modern genius, fed upon the Middle Ages

and Spain, driven to belie itself, and to hark back to ancient times, pictured for us that Castilian Rome, which is unquestionably sublime, but wherein, except perhaps in *Nicomède*, which was so derided by the last century for its bold and natural coloring, we look in vain for the real Rome or the real Corneille.

Racine experienced the same annoyances but did not make the same resistance. Neither in his genius nor in his character was there a trace of Corneille's high-spirited asperity. He bowed in silence, and abandoned to the disdain of his time his charming elegy, *Esther*, his magnificent epic, *Athalie*. It is reasonable to conclude that, if he had not been paralyzed as he was by the prejudices of his generation, if he had been less frequently embraced by the classic cramp-fish, he would not have failed to introduce Locuste in his drama between Narcissus and Nero, and above all would not have relegated to the wings that admirable banquet scene where Seneca's pupil poisons Britannicus in the cup of reconciliation. But can we expect the bird to fly under the receiver of an air-pump? Ah! how many beautiful passages have *people of taste* cost us, from Scudéri to La Harpe! A noble work might be composed from all that their parched breath has withered in the germ. And yet our great poets have succeeded in making their genius stand out in bold relief through all these embarrassments. Often the attempt to wall them up behind dogmas and rules is fruitless. Like the Hebrew giant they carry the doors of their prison with them upon the mountain.

But still we hear the same refrain, and doubtless we shall hear it for years to come, "Follow the rules! Copy the models! The models have been formed by the rules!" One moment! If that be so there are two species of models, those which have fashioned themselves according to the rules, and, before them, those according to which the rules were made. Now, in which of these two categories should genius seek a place? Although it is always a hard lot to be brought in contact with pedants, is it not a thousand times better to give them lessons than to take lessons from them? And then, to copy! Is the reflection equal to the light? is the satellite which revolves incessantly in the same circle to be compared with the central, generative star? With all his poesy, Virgil is naught but the moon of Homer.

And tell us, pray, whom we are to copy? The ancients? We have proved that their theatre has nothing in common with ours. Moreover, Voltaire, who will have none of Shakespeare, is no better disposed toward the Greeks. Let him tell us why.

"The Greeks ventured to present spectacles no less revolting to us. Hippolyte, bruised by his fall, counts his wounds, and utters pitiful shrieks. Philoctetes is seized with a paroxysm of pain; black blood flows from his wound. Œdipus, covered with blood, which is still dripping from the eyes he has torn from their sockets, complains bitterly of gods and men. We hear the shrieks of Clytemnestra, murdered by her own son, and Electra upon the stage, cries: 'Strike! spare her not! she did not spare our father.' Prometheus is made fast to his rock by nails driven through his stomach and his arms. The Furies make answer to Clytemnestra's bleeding shade, by inarticulate howls. Art was in its infancy in the time of Æschylus, as it was at London in Shakespeare's time."

Whom, then, shall we copy? The moderns? Ah! copy copies! God forbid!

"But," again some one will object, "from your conception of art it would seem that you look for none but great poets, that you always count upon genius." Art does not count

upon mediocrity. It prescribes no rules for it, nor knows it; in the eyes of art mediocrity has no existence; art provides wings, not crutches. Alas! D'Aubignac followed the rules; Campestron copied the models. But what cares art for that? It does not build its palace for ants, but lets them build their ant-hill without knowing whether their burlesque of its edifice is built upon its foundation.

The critics of the scholastic school place their poets in a singular position. On the one hand they constantly cry out to them: "Copy the models!" On the other hand they are wont to proclaim that "the models are inimitable!" Now, if their workmen, by dint of hard labor, succeed under these embarrassing circumstances in producing some rapid colorless imitation of the masters, these ingrates, after duly scrutinizing the new *refaccimiento*, exclaim at one time: "That resembles nothing!" At another time: "That resembles everything!" And, by a system of logic made expressly for the occasion, each of these formulæ is a criticism.

Let us speak out boldly. The time has come to do it, and it would be strange indeed, if at this time liberty, like the light, should extend everywhere, except to the one place where liberty is more logically a native production than anywhere else in the world, the domain of thought. Let us take the hammer to their theories and systems and treatises. Let us tear down the old stucco-work which conceals the façade of art! There are no rules or models, or rather there are no other rules than the general laws of nature, which extend over the whole domain of art, and the special laws which, in every composition, result from the conditions peculiar to each subject. The former are unchangeable, deep-seated, and abiding; the others variable, external, and can be used but once. The former are the framework of the structure; the latter the scaffolding used in its construction, and rebuilt for each house. The former are the flesh and blood, the latter the clothing of the drama. But these rules are not set down in the treatises. Richelet does not suspect their existence. True genius, which divines rather than learns, deduces, for each work, its general laws from the general order of things, its special laws from the special nature of the subject it treats; not after the fashion of the chemist, who lights the fire under his retort, blows it till it blazes brightly, heats his crucible, analyzes and destroys; but rather like the bee, which flies upon its wings of gold from flower to flower, and steals from each its honey, leaving it as beautiful and fragrant as before.

The poet—upon this point we insist—ought to take counsel of naught but nature, truth, and inspiration, which is, in a certain sense both truth and nature. *Quando he*, says Lope de Vega,

Quando he de escribir una comedia,
Encierro los preceptos con seis llaves.

To imprison precepts, six keys are not, in truth, too many. Let the poet above all things beware of copying anyone, Shakespeare no more than Molière, Schiller no more than Corneille. If true talent could abdicate its own nature to that extent, and thus lay aside its own personality to transform itself into another, it would sacrifice everything to play the part of double. It is as if a god should turn footman. No! we must draw our inspiration from the primitive sources. It is the same essence, distributed through the soil, that gives life to

all the trees in the forest, however much they vary in shape and fruit and foliage. It is the same nature which fertilizes and nourishes the most diverse geniuses. The poet is a tree exposed to the fury of every wind, and drenched by every fall of dew, which bears its works like its fruit, as the fabulist bore his fables. Why cling to a master? why graft one's self upon a model? It is infinitely better to be a thorn-bush or a thistle, nourished in the same soil as the cedar and palm tree, than to be a fungus or lichen growing upon those trees. The thorn-bush lives, the fungus vegetates. Moreover, however great the cedar and the palm may be, one cannot become great one's self upon the sap one sucks from them. The parasite of a giant would be at best a dwarf. The oak, colossal as it is, can give birth to and sustain nothing more than the mistletoe.

Let there be no mistake: if some of our poets have succeeded in attaining greatness, copyists though they be, it is because they have listened often to the voice of nature and to the promptings of their own genius, even while forming themselves after antique models; it is because they have often been themselves to some extent. Their branches clung to the tree beside them, but their roots were buried in the fertile soil of the art. They were the ivy, not the mistletoe. Then came the imitators of a lower order, who, having no root in the soil, confined themselves to imitation. As Charles Nodier says: "After the school of Athens, the school of Alexandria." Thereupon there was a deluge of mediocrity; thereupon there came an ocean of treatises, a constant source of vexation to true talent, but a most convenient adjunct of mediocrity. We were told that everything was done, and God was forbidden to create other Molières, other Corneilles. Memory was substituted for imagination. This very thing was made the subject of an imperious rule, and aphorisms were written upon it. "*To imagine*," says La Harpe with his naïve self-assurance, "is in reality *to remember*, nothing more."

But what of nature, pray? of nature and truth? And here, in order to prove that, far from demolishing the art, the new ideas seek simply to reconstruct it upon a more substantial foundation, let us try to point out the impassable barrier which, in our opinion, separates reality from the standpoint of art from reality from the standpoint of nature. It is absurd to confound the two, as some injudicious partisans of *romanticism* do. Reality from the standpoint of art cannot be, as several writers have said, *absolute* reality. Art cannot produce the thing itself. Let us suppose, for example, one of these unthinking advocates of absolute nature, of nature considered without reference to art, to be present at the performance of a romantic play, the *Cid*, for instance. "What's this?" he will say at the first word. "The *Cid* speaks in verse! It's not *natural* to speak in verse." "How would you have him speak, pray?" "In prose." Very good. A moment later: "What!" he will continue, if he is consistent, "the *Cid* speaks French!" "What then?" "Nature demands that he speak in his own tongue; he must speak Spanish." We are at a loss to understand; but so be it. You fancy that is all? By no means. Before the tenth sentence in pure Castilian, he should rise and ask if the *Cid* who is speaking is the real *Cid*, in flesh and blood. By what right does this actor, whose name is Pierre or Jacques, take the name of *Cid*? That is false. There is no reason why he should not go on to demand that the sun be substituted for the footlights, *real* trees and *real* houses for the deceitful wings. For, once started upon that road, logic holds you by the throat, and you cannot stop.

We must therefore admit, or be convicted of talking nonsense, that the domain of art and that of nature are entirely distinct. Nature and art are two things, otherwise one or the other of them would not exist. Art, beside its ideal part, has a terrestrial and practical part. Whatever it may do, it is confined between grammar and prosody, between Vaugelas and Richelet. For its most fanciful creations it has forms, means of execution, a complete apparatus to set in motion. For genius there are delicate instruments; for mediocrity rough tools.

Others before us, we think, have said that the drama is a mirror in which nature is reflected. But if that mirror is a smooth, level surface, it will give back only a flat, insipid image of objects, accurate, but devoid of animation; we know that light and color are not reproduced by simple reflection. It is essential therefore that the drama should be a concentrating mirror, which, instead of weakening, concentrates and focuses the rays of color, which makes of a feeble glimmer a bright light, of a light a flame. Then only is the drama in accord with art.

The stage is a point where all the rays come together. Everything that exists in the world, in history, in life, in mankind, may and should be reflected there, but all beneath the magic wand of art. Art traverses the centuries, questions the ancient chronicles, strives to reproduce reality in matters of fact, and above all in manners and characteristics, which are much less open to doubt and contradiction than facts; restores what the annalists have lopped off, harmonizes what they have gathered, divines their omissions and repairs them, fills the gaps left by them with fancies conceived in the spirit of the time, groups what they have left scattered, sets in motion the machinery of Providence under the human marionettes, clothes the whole with a style which is at once poetic and natural, and imparts to it that life and sparkle which give birth to illusion, that prestige of reality which arouses the enthusiasm of the spectator, and of the poet first of all, for the poet is in earnest. Thus the aim of art is almost divine; to resuscitate, if it is writing history; to create, if it is writing poetry.

It is a noble and beautiful thing to watch the progress of a drama constructed on these broad lines, wherein art develops nature; a drama wherein the action goes on to the end with firm and graceful steps, equally free from prolixity and from undue compression; a drama, in short, wherein the poet accomplishes to the full the multifold end of his art, which is to lay open to the spectator a double horizon, to throw light upon the interior and exterior of his men and women; upon their exterior by their words and their acts, upon their interior by their *asides*, and their monologues; in a word to present in the same picture the drama of life and the drama of conscience.

It is needless to say that if the poet is to make a selection for a work of this kind (and he certainly should do it), he should select what is characteristic rather than what is beautiful. Not that he ought to *manufacture local color*, as they say to-day,—that is to say, to add a few discordant touches here and there to a whole which is utterly false and conventional. If local color is to be applied at all, it should be, not upon the surface of the drama, but at its very heart, whence it will spread out of itself, naturally and evenly, to every corner of the drama, so to speak, as the sap ascends from the root to the topmost leaf upon the tree. The drama should be thoroughly impregnated with the atmosphere of the time in which the scene is laid;

it should be in some sort in the air, so that one would not observe save upon going in and coming out that one had changed his century and his surroundings. If some study, some labor be required to attain this end so much the better. It is well that the avenues of art should be obstructed by these thistles, which deter all travelers save those of strong will. Moreover, this same study, supported by burning inspiration, will insure the absence of a vice which kills, the *commonplace*. To be commonplace is the failing of short-sighted, short-breathed poets. In this view of the stage, every figure should be held down to his most prominent, most individual characteristic. Even the vulgar and the unimportant should have a distinguishing mark of their own.

Like God, the true poet is present in all parts of his work at once. Genius resembles the die which stamps the royal effigy upon copper pieces as well as upon gold crowns.

We do not hesitate,—and this fact alone should prove to fair-minded men how far we are from seeking to disfigure the art—we do not hesitate to regard verse as one of the methods best adapted to preserve the drama from the scourge we have mentioned, as one of the most effectual dykes against the irruption of the *commonplace*, which, like democracy, always flows between full banks in men's minds. And at this point we beg the younger literary generation to permit us to point out an error into which it seems to us to have fallen, an error too fully justified by the incredible aberrations of the old school. The new generation is at that period of its growth when it can easily be set right.

There has recently sprung up, as it were a final ramification of the old classic trunk, or rather, one of the excrescences, the polypi, which failing strength develops, and which are a sign of decomposition, much more than of life,—there has recently sprung up a most remarkable school of dramatic poetry. This school seems to us to have had for its master and ancestor the poet who marks the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, the man of descriptions and periphrasis, Delille to wit, who, it is said, toward the end of his life, boasted, after the manner of the Homeric catalogues, of having *made* twelve camels, four dogs, three horses, including Job's, six tigers, two cats, a game of chess, one of backgammon, a checker-board, a billiard-table, several winters, many summers, a great number of springtimes, fifty sunsets and so many daybreaks that he lost his head trying to count them.

Now Delille exercised his talent upon tragedy. He is the father (he and not Racine, great God!) of a pretended school of elegance and taste which has flourished of late years. Tragedy is not in this good man's sight, what it was to Will Shakespeare, for example, a fruitful source of emotion of every sort, but a convenient medium for the solution of a multitude of trivial problems, which it propounds to itself by the way. This school, instead of rejecting, as the real original French classic school did, the trivialities and meannesses of life, seeks them out and collects them with avidity. The grotesque, shunned like bad company by the tragic muse of Louis XIV.'s day, cannot pass unmolested before the adherents of this later school. "*It must be described,*" they cry; "that is to say, *ennobled.*" A scene in the guard-house, a popular uprising, the fish-market, the galleys, the wine-shop, the *poule au pot* of Henri IV., are treasure-trove in its eyes. It seizes upon all this riff-raff and washes it clean; it covers its nastiness with tinsel and spangles: *purpureus assiutur pannus*. Its purpose

seems to be to confer letters patent of nobility upon all these plebeian appurtenances of the drama; and each of these letters under the great seal is a tirade.

This muse, as may be imagined, is sorely afflicted with prudery. Accustomed as she is to the caresses of periphrasis, the plain-speaking which she sometimes is forced to hear horrifies her. It is not consistent with her dignity to speak naturally. She *underlines* old Corneille for his blunt way of saying:

Un tas d'hommes perdus de dettes et de crimes,

Chimène, qui l'eût cru ?—Rodriguè, qui l'eût dit ?

Quand leur Flaminius marchandait Annibal,

Ah ! ne me brouillez pas avec la republique, etc., etc.

She has her *Tout beau, monsieur !* always on her lips; and many *seigneurs !* and *madames !* are necessary to obtain forgiveness for our illustrious Racine for his monosyllabic *dogs*, and for his *Claude* so shamelessly placed in *Agrippina's bed*.

The *Melpomene*, as she calls herself, would shudder at the thought of touching a chronicle. She leaves it to the costumer to ascertain to what period the dramas she writes refer. History in her eyes is bad form and in bad taste. For example, how can one endure kings and queens who swear? They must be raised from their royal dignity to the dignity of tragedy. By promotion of this sort she ennobled Henri IV. In this way the people's king, washed clean by M. Legouvé, has seen his *ventre-saint-gris* banished from his mouth by two sentences, and has been reduced, like the girl in the fable, to the necessity of letting fall from those royal lips naught but pearls and rubies and sapphires; in very truth the apotheosis of falsity.

Nothing, in fact, is so utterly *commonplace* as this conventional refinement and nobility. In this style of composition there is no originality, no imagination, no invention. Nothing but what one can see anywhere, inflated rhetoric, bombast, commonplaces, flowery college oratory, the poetry of Latin verses. Borrowed ideas decked out in second-hand finery. The poets of this school are elegant after the style of stage princes and princesses, always sure of finding in ticketed cases at the costumer's pinchbeck crowns and mantles, the only disadvantage being that everybody has used them. If these poets do not make requisition upon the Bible, it is because they also have their great book, the *Dictionary of Rhymes*. That is the source of their poetry: *fontes aquarum*.

It will readily be understood that, in all this medley, nature and truth are left to take care of themselves. It would be great good fortune if any remnant of those qualities should survive in this cataclysm of false art, false style and false poetry. This is the explanation of the error into which several of our distinguished reformers have been led. Disgusted by the stiffness, the ostentation, the pomposity of this *soi-disant* dramatic poetry, they have come to believe that the poetic elements of our language are incompatible with the natural and the true. The Alexandrine has worn out their patience so often, that they have condemned it, in some sort, without a fair hearing, and have concluded, a little hastily perhaps, that the drama should be written in prose.

Therein they err. If it be true that the false prevails in the style as well as in the action of certain French tragedies, they should not blame the verses therefor, but the versifiers. They should condemn not the form employed, but those who employ it; the workmen, not the tool.

To convince one's self how very slight are the obstacles offered by the nature of our poetry to the free expression of whatever is true, it should not perhaps be studied in Racine, but often in Corneille, always in Molière. Racine, a divine poet, is elegiac, lyric, epic; Molière is dramatic. It is time to do justice upon the criticisms poured out upon this admirable style by the execrable taste of the last century, and to say aloud that Molière stands at the head of all our dramatists, not as poet only, but as writer. *Palmas vere habet iste duas.*

In his works the verse embraces the idea, becomes an essential part thereof, compresses and develops it at once, imparts to it a more graceful, more definite, more complete form, and administers it to us, so to speak, in the shape of an elixir. Verse is the visible form of thought. Hence its peculiar fitness for the perspective of the stage. Written in a certain way, it imparts its own dignity to matters, which, but for it, would be trivial and insignificant. It makes the tissue of the style more compact and more delicate. It is the knot which stops the thread. It is the girdle which holds the clothing in place, and gives it all its folds. What harm, therefore, could be done by introducing nature and truth in verse? We ask our advocates of prose themselves to tell us in what way they injure the poetry of Molière? Does wine—if we may be pardoned one more trivial comparison—does wine cease to be wine because it is in bottles?

Had we the right to say what, in our opinion, should be the style of dramatic poetry, we should declare our liking for free, outspoken, loyal verse, for verse that dares express its meaning without prudery or affectation, that passes naturally from comedy to tragedy, from the sublime to the grotesque; verse that is by turns poetical and practical, always artistic and inspired, profound, dealing in surprises, of wide range, and true: verse that makes bold at fitting times to change the place of the cæsura and thereby avoid monotony of Alexandrines; verse that prefers the *enjambement*, which lengthens out the line, to the inversion of ideas, which confuses the sense, verse that is faithful to rhyme, that enslaved queen, that supreme beauty of our poetry, that creator of our metre; verse that has a never-failing supply of truth for every turn of thought, and unfathomable secret methods of composition, verse that assumes, like Proteus, a thousand shapes, but changes not its type or characteristics; that avoids *tirade*; sportive in dialogue, ever concealing itself behind the character; verse that is intent before all else upon keeping in its place, and that when it falls to its lot to be *beautiful*, is beautiful only by chance, so to speak, in spite of itself, and unconsciously; verse that is lyric, epic, dramatic, as occasion requires; verse that knows every note in the chromatic scale of poetry, that can descend from high to low, from the loftiest to the most trivial ideas, from the most absurd to the most serious, from the most superficial to the most abstract, without once exceeding the proper limits of a spoken scene; in a word, such verse as the man would write whom a benevolent fairy should endow with the soul of Corneille and the brain of Molière. It seems to us that such verse would be *quite as beautiful as prose*.

Verse of that stamp would have nothing in common with that other variety upon which we were but now holding an autopsy. The distinction between them will be easy to point out, if a certain talented gentleman, to whom the author of this book is personally indebted, will permit us to borrow his trenchant phrase; the other poetry was descriptive, this would be picturesque.

We cannot repeat too often that verse upon the stage should lay aside all self-conceit, all arrogance, all coquetry. It is naught but a form, and a form which should be open to any impression, which has nothing to impart to the drama, but on the other hand should serve as the medium to receive whatever the drama contains and transmit it to the spectator: French, Latin, the text of laws, royal oaths, popular catchwords, comedy, tragedy, laughter, tears, prose and poetry. Woe to the poet whose verse does not give voice to his thoughts! But this form is a form of bronze, which incloses the thought in its metre, a form in which the drama is indestructible, which impresses it more indelibly upon the actor's mind, warns him when he omits or adds a word, prevents him from changing his lines, from substituting himself for the author, makes each word sacred, and has this result, that what the poet has said remains for a long while fresh in the spectator's memory. The idea, when steeped in verse, at once takes on a more incisive, more brilliant quality. It is as if iron were transformed to steel.

We can but feel that prose, being of necessity much more timid, compelled to wean the drama from the epic or lyric form, and reduced to mere dialogue, has far fewer resources. Its wings are much less broad! Hence it is much more easy of accomplishment; mediocrity easily attains success therein; and for the sake of a few works of distinction like those which have appeared of late years, the art would very soon be heaped up with dwarfs and abortions. Another fraction of the reformers are inclined to favor a mixture of poetry and prose after the style of Shakespeare. This method has its advantages. There is, however, a decided incongruity in the transitions from one to the other form, and when a substance is homogeneous it is much more enduring. However, whether the drama be written in prose or verse is not the most important question. The rank of a work must be determined, not by its form, but by its intrinsic value. To questions of this sort there is but one reliable answer. There is but one weight which can turn the scale in the balance of art, and that is genius.

~ For the rest, the first, the indispensable attribute of a dramatic writer, whether he write in prose or verse, is accuracy. Not mere superficial accuracy, a good or bad quality of the descriptive school, which takes Lhomond and Restant for the wings of its Pegasus; but substantial, common-sense accuracy, which is permeated with the genius of our idiom, which has explored its roots, and made itself familiar with its etymology; always free, because it is sure of its facts, and always in accord with the logical tendencies of our language. Our Lady grammar holds the other variety in leading strings; this has a cord attached to the collar of grammar. It can venture to go any length in the way of creating or inventing its own style; it has that right. For, whatever certain men may have said, without giving sufficient thought to what they were saying, among whom we must give a place to him who writes these lines, the French language is not and never will be *fixed*. A language cannot be fixed. The

human intellect is always progressing, and languages progress with it. So it is with everything. When the body changes, why should not the coat change? The French language of the nineteenth century is no more the French language of the eighteenth century, than that was the French language of the seventeenth, or than the French language of the seventeenth century was that of the sixteenth. The language of Montaigne is not that of Rabelais, the language of Pascal is not that of Montaigne, the language of Montesquieu is not that of Pascal. Each one of these four languages taken by itself commands our admiration, because it is original. Each epoch has its own ideas, and it needs must have apt words in which to express those ideas. Languages are like the sea, in that they ebb and flow unceasingly. At certain times they leave one shore of the world of thought and overflow another. All that is thus deserted by their ebbing tide, dries up and vanishes. In this way ideas are lost to sight, and words go out of use. It is the same with human tongues as with everything. Each century adds something to them and takes something away. What can be done? fate so decrees. Vain therefore is the attempt to turn to stone the mobile physiognomy of our tongue at a given moment. In vain do our literary Joshuas cry out to it to stand still; a language can no more stand still than can the sun. On the day when it becomes *fixed*, it dies. That is why the French of a certain contemporary school is a dead language.

Such, minus a more extended development which might make them more convincing, are the *present* ideas of the author of this book touching the drama. He is very far, however, from presuming to offer his maiden effort in the dramatic field as an emanation of these ideas; on the contrary, it is more than likely that they are themselves the results of that effort. It would be very convenient for him doubtless, and much more artful, to rest his book upon his preface, and defend each with the other. He prefers less subtlety and more frankness. He proposes therefore to be the first to point out how exceedingly fragile is the knot which unites the preface to the drama. His first plan, due first of all to his sloth, was to present the work to the public entirely alone; *el demonio sin las cuernas*, as Yriarte would say. It was not until it was duly and definitely completed, that, at the solicitation of certain friends of his,—injudicious friends, no doubt,—he determined to settle accounts with himself in a preface; to trace, so to speak, upon the chart the journey he had just made into the realms of poetry, to take stock of the additions to his store of knowledge, good or bad, which he brought back with him, and of the new aspects under which the domain of art presented itself to his mind. Advantage will of course be taken of this admission, to repeat the reproof a German critic has already administered, for writing “an essay in behalf of his own poetry.” What does it matter? In the first place his purpose was rather to destroy than to write essays. In the second place would it not always be better to write essays based upon a poem, than a poem based upon an essay? But no, once more he affirms that he has neither the talent to create, nor the desire to establish systems. “Systems,” cleverly says Voltaire, “are like rats, which rush out through twenty holes, and find several of them through which they cannot get back.” It would have been therefore a useless undertaking for him, and quite beyond his strength. On the contrary, he has undertaken to plead for the freedom of art against the despotism of systems, codes and rules. It is his custom to follow at all risks whatever he takes for his inspiration, and to change the mould as often as he changes the metal. Dogma

in art is something that he shuns above all else. God forbid that he should aspire to be one of those men, romanticists or classicists, who produce *works according to their system*, who condemn themselves never to have more than one form in their mind, and always to *prove* something; to follow other laws than those of their own organization and nature. The artificial work of these men, however talented they may be, has no existence so far as art is concerned. It is theorizing, not poetry.

Having, in all that has gone before, attempted to point out what was, in our opinion, the origin of the drama, what are its characteristics, and what should be its style, the moment has come to descend from these lofty considerations concerning art in general to the particular case which led us to put them forth. It remains for us to say a word to the reader as to the work before him, this *Cromwell*; and as it is not an attractive subject to us, we will dismiss it in very few words.

Oliver Cromwell is one of those historical personages who are very celebrated and very little known. The majority of his biographers—and among them are historians,—have left this grand figure very incomplete. It would seem that they dared not describe all the features of this strange, colossal prototype of the reformed religion, of the political revolution in England. Almost all have confined themselves to a reproduction at somewhat greater length of the simple and forbidding profile drawn by Bossuet from the standpoint of a monarchist and Catholic, sitting in his episcopal chair which rested against the throne of Louis XIV.

Like everybody else the author of this book was content with that likeness. The name of Oliver Cromwell awoke in him no other conception than that of a fanatical regicide and a great soldier. But upon overhauling the old chronicles, which he delights to do, and rummaging about at random among the English memoirs of the seventeenth century, he was surprised to find that an entirely new Cromwell was gradually unfolded before his eyes. He was no longer Cromwell, the soldier and politician, painted by Bossuet, and nothing more; he was a complex, many-sided being, a combination of contrary elements, of many evil mingled with many good qualities, a miracle of genius and narrow-mindedness; a sort of Tiberius-Dandin, tyrant of Europe and plaything of his family; an old regicide, humbling the ambassadors of every king on the continent, and tormented by his young royalist daughter; austere and gloomy in his manners, and keeping four court fools always about him; scribbling wretched verses; sober, simple and frugal, and a stickler for the strictest observance of the rules of etiquette; a vulgar soldier and an acute politician; skilled in theological quibbling, and taking great delight therein; a dull, diffuse, obscene orator, but very clever in speaking so as to be understood by anyone of whom he wished to make a proselyte; a hypocrite and fanatic; a visionary, governed by the phantoms of his childhood, believing in astrologers and proscribing them; suspicious to excess, always threatening, rarely sanguinary; rigidly observant of the Puritan ordinances, and wasting several hours a day in buffoonery; abrupt and contemptuous with his intimates, and very gentle with the sectaries, whom he feared; quieting his remorse with subtleties, and playing tricks upon his conscience; abounding in address, in stratagem, and in resources; keeping his imagination in check by his common sense; grotesque and sublime; in a word, one of those men who are *square at the*

base, as Napoleon, himself the type and leader of the class, described them in his mathematically exact, poetic language.

He who writes these lines felt, in presence of this rare and striking combination of qualities, that Bossuet's impassioned silhouette was wholly inadequate. He began to walk around this lofty figure and view it on all sides, and was thereupon strongly tempted to depict the giant in all his aspects. It was rich soil to work in. Beside the warrior and statesman, it remained to sketch the theologian, the pedant, the wretched poet, the visionary, the buffoon, the father, the husband, the human Proteus, in a word, the twofold Cromwell, *homo et vir*.

There was one period of his life in particular, when this extraordinary character was exhibited in all its phases. It was not, as one might think at the first glance, the period of the trial of Charles I., instinct as that period is with pathetic, terrible interest; it was the moment when the ambitious regicide sought to reap the fruit of the monarch's death; it was the moment when Cromwell, having attained what would have seemed to another the zenith of his possible fortune, master of England, whose innumerable factions were silent beneath his feet, master of Scotland, of which he made a subject province, and of Ireland, which he turned into a convict prison, master of Europe by virtue of his fleets, his armies and his diplomacy, attempted to bring about the realization of the earliest dream of his childhood, to attain the ultimate object of his ambition, to make himself king. History has never concealed a more impressive lesson within a more impressive drama. In the first place the Protector so arranged matters that he was solicited to accept the crown. The solemn farce began with addresses from towns, addresses from cities, addresses from counties; then came an Act of Parliament. Cromwell, the anonymous author of the play, chooses to appear displeased with it; he puts out one hand toward the sceptre, then draws it back; he draws near in sidelong fashion to the throne from which he has swept away the reigning dynasty. At last he suddenly makes up his mind; by his order Westminster is decked with banners, the platform is erected, the crown is ordered from the jeweler, and the day for the ceremony of coronation is appointed. But what a strange ending! on that very day, before the people, the troops, the peasantry, in the great hall of Westminster, upon the platform from which it was his purpose to descend a king, he seems suddenly to awake with a start at the sight of the crown, asks if he is dreaming, what all the pomp and ceremony means, and in a discourse lasting three hours declines the royal dignity.

Had he been warned by spies of the existence of two conspiracies, of cavaliers and round-heads, who were to avail themselves of his blunder, and seek to effect their object on the same day? Was it the revolution in his mind caused by the silence or the murmurs of the populace, thunderstruck to see their regicide approach the throne? Was it simply the wisdom of true genius, the instinct of a prudent, although unbridled ambition which realizes how much a single step frequently changes a man's position and attitude, and which dares not expose its plebeian organization to the wind of unpopularity? Or was it all these things at once? These are questions upon which no contemporary document throws a satisfactory light. So much the better; the liberty of the poet is the more untrammelled, and the drama is the gainer for the latitude which history leaves it. It will be seen that the latitude here is vast and unique; it is the decisive hour, the great turning-point of Cromwell's life. It is

the moment when his vain chimera passes away, when the present kills the future, when, to use a vulgar but forcible expression, his destiny *misses fire*. Cromwell's whole fortune is at stake in the comedy that is going on between England and himself.

Such then is the man, such the age which the author has tried to depict in this book. He has yielded to the almost childlike delight with which he touches the strings of this great harpsichord. Certain it is that more practised hands could have drawn therefrom a strain of noble and soul-stirring melody, not of those melodies which please the ear only, but of those deeper melodies which send a thrill through a man's whole being, as if each string of the instrument were knotted to a fibre of the heart. He has yielded to the desire to depict all these phases of fanaticism and superstition, maladies which attack religion at certain periods; to the longing to "make sport of all these men," as Hamlet says; to construct below and about Cromwell, centre and pivot of that court and people, who attracts all men to his cause, and impresses his own vigor upon all, that twofold conspiracy contrived by two factions, which abhor each other, which join forces to overthrow the man who stands in their way, but unite without mingling; and to sketch the Puritan party, fanatical, gloomy, disinterested, taking for their leader the smallest of men for so great a rôle, the conceited and weak-kneed Lambert; and the party of the cavaliers, reckless, jovial, unscrupulous, careless, devoted, guided by the man, who, save in the matter of devotion to the cause, is their least fitting representative, the upright and stern Ormond; and the ambassadors, who were so humble in their bearing before the soldier of fortune; and that extraordinary court, a mixture of adventurers and great noblemen vying with one another in servility; and the four court fools, whom the contemptuous neglect of history leaves one free to depict for one's self; and the protector's family, each member of which is a thorn in his side; and Thurlow, Cromwell's *fidus Achates*; and the Jewish rabbi, Israel Ben Manasseh, usurer, spy and astrologer, despicably vile in two capacities, sublime in the third; and Rochester, strange Rochester, absurd and clever, elegant and vulgar, always swearing, always in love and always drunk, as he himself boasted to Bishop Burnet, a wretched poet and fine gentleman, vicious and innocent, playing for his head, and caring but little to win the game, provided that it amused him; in a word, capable of anything, of cunning and of heedlessness, of folly and of calculation, of villainy and generosity; and the barbarian Carr, of whom history hands down but one trait, but that a very characteristic one; and the fanatics of all sorts and kinds, Harrison, the marauding fanatic; Barebones, the shopkeeping fanatic; Syndercomb, the bully; Augustine Garland, the tearful and devout assassin; the gallant Colonel Overton, well-informed, but somewhat bombastic; the austere and stiff-necked Ludlow, who left his ashes and his epitaph at Lausanne; and lastly, "Milton and a few other men of intellect," as says a pamphlet of 1675 (*Cromwell the Politician*), which reminds one of the *Dantem quemdam* (a certain Dante) of the Italian chronicle.

We pass over many secondary personages, each of whom has his own peculiarities and his own marked individuality, and all of whom contributed to the fascination which this momentous episode of history exercised upon the author. Upon that episode as a basis he constructed his drama. He wrote it in verse, because it pleased him so to do. A perusal of it will show how little thought he gave to his work in writing this preface; how unselfishly,

for example, he fought against the dogma of the unities. The action of his drama takes place in London from beginning to end ; it opens on the 25th June, 1657, at three o'clock in the morning, and closes on the 26th at noon. Thus it will be seen that he has almost kept within the classic regulations, as they are now laid down by the professors of the poetic art. Let them not, however, feel grateful to him therefor. Not with Aristotle's permission, but with the permission of history, did he thus concentrate his drama ; and because, other things being equal, he prefers a concentrated subject to one that covers a deal of ground.

It is evident that this drama, in its present proportions, could not be represented upon our stage. It is too long. But the reader will perhaps recognize the fact that it was from beginning to end written for the stage. On approaching his subject to study it carefully, the author saw or thought that he saw the impossibility of producing a faithful reproduction of it upon our stage, in the exceptional position it now occupies between the academic Charybdis, and the administrative Scylla, between the literary juries and the political censorship. He was required to make his choice ; either the coaxing, crafty, false tragedy, to be played, or the drama, audaciously true to life, to be prohibited. The first was not worth the trouble of writing ; he preferred to try his hand at the second. That is why, despairing of ever being able to produce it upon the stage, he abandoned himself without reserve to the caprices of composition, to the pleasure of painting with a freer hand, to the natural developments of his subject, which, if they make more certain its banishment from the stage, have at all events the advantage of making it almost complete from an historical standpoint. The reading committees, however, are an obstacle of only secondary importance. If it should happen that the dramatic censorship, realizing that this harmless, accurate, conscientious picture of Cromwell and his time has no possible relation to our own epoch, consents to its production, the author, in that event, but in that event only, might extract from this drama a play which should venture to show itself upon the stage, and would inevitably be hissed.

Until then he will continue to hold aloof from the theatre. And even so he will exchange his peaceful, cherished retirement for the excitement of that new world quite soon enough. God grant that he may never repent having exposed the virgin obscurity of his name and person to the reefs, the squalls, the tempests of the pit, and above all (for what does the failure of a play matter ?) to the wretched bickering of the wings ; having entered that variable, foggy, stormy atmosphere, where ignorance dogmatizes, where envy hisses, where cabals crouch and crawl, where honest talent is so often misrepresented, where the noble candor of genius is sometimes so out of place, where mediocrity triumphs in pulling down to its level the superior talents which stand in its light, where one finds so many little men for one great man, so many nobodies for one Talma, so many myrmidons for one Achilles ! This sketch will seem ill-humored, perchance, and unflattering ; but does it not accurately point out the distinction between our stage, the scene of intrigues and broils, and the solemn serenity of the stage of ancient times ?

Whatever happens, he thinks it his duty to warn in advance the small number of persons who might be tempted by such a spectacle, that such an acting play as he would extract from *Cromwell* would occupy not less than the ordinary duration of an evening's performance. It would be hard to establish a *romantic* stage upon other conditions. Certain it is, that if one

cares for something different from those tragedies, wherein one or two characters, abstract types of a purely metaphysical idea, stalk solemnly about upon a narrow stage occupied by a few subordinate personages, colorless reflections of the heroes, whose duty it is to fill up the gaps in a simple, uniform single-stringed plot; if one is tired of all that, surely a whole evening is not too long a time to devote to the delineation at some length of a man among men, of a critical period in history; the one with his character, his beliefs, which dominate him and his character; his passions which disturb his beliefs, his character and his genius; his tastes, which give direction to his passions; his habits which discipline his tastes, and muzzle his passions; and the endless procession of men of all sorts, whom these various attributes keep in constant commotion about him; the other, with its manners, its laws, its fashions, its spirit, its enlightenment, its superstitions, its events, and its people, whom all these elements mould in this shape or that like soft wax. It is needless to say that such a picture will be of gigantic dimensions. In place of a single individuality, like that with which the abstract drama of the old school is content, there will be twenty, forty, fifty, as you please, of every degree of prominence. The drama will be crowded with figures. Would it not be worse than absurd to assign to it a paltry two hours, in order to give the remainder of the time to operacomique or farce? to curtail Shakespeare for Bobèche? And have no fear, if the action is well regulated, that the multitude of characters introduced will result in tiring out the spectator or confusing the drama. Shakespeare, who abounds in trivial details, is at the same time, and for that very reason, most imposing by the grandeur of the ensemble. The oak casts an enormous shadow with its millions of slender, detached leaves.

Let us hope that we shall soon become accustomed here in France to devote an entire evening to a single play. In England and in Germany there are plays which last six hours. The Greeks, of whom we hear so much,—and we cite at this point, à la Scudéri, the classic Dacier, Chapter VII. of his treatise upon the Art of Poetry,—the Greeks sometimes went so far as to perform twelve or sixteen plays a day. Among a people who are fond of theatrical performances, the faculty of paying attention is more *long-lived* than one might suppose. The *Mariage de Figaro*, the connecting link of the great trilogy of Beaumarchais, fills an entire evening, and who was ever bored or fatigued by that? Beaumarchais was worthy to take the first step toward that goal of modern dramatic art, wherein it is impossible, with but two hours, to satisfy the deep invincible interest, which is produced by a multiform plot of vast extent. But, we shall be told, a single play of such proportions would be monotonous and would seem very long. Not so! On the contrary it would lose its present length and monotony. What is the custom now? The spectator's enjoyment is divided into sharply distinguished parts. They give him in the first place two hours of serious pleasure, then one hour of pleasant fooling; with the hour taken up in *entr'actes*, which we do not count, four hours in all. What would the romantic drama do? It would blend artistically these two species of pleasure. It would lead the audience constantly from sober mood to laughter, from mirthful interest to heart-rending emotion, "from grave to gay, from pleasant to severe." For, as we have already demonstrated, the drama is the grotesque with the sublime, the soul within the body, tragedy beneath comedy. Do you not see that such performances, although made up of but a single play, are worth a multitude of others, in that they afford you repose

from one impression by another, sharpening the tragic upon the comic, the gay upon the terrible, and at need calling in the fascination of the opera? The romantic stage would make a high-flavored, varied, savory banquet of that which upon the classic stage is a drug divided between two pills.

The author has thus soon exhausted what he had to say to the reader. He cannot guess how the critics will welcome this drama and these few summary ideas, stripped of their corollaries, stated without their ramifications, thrown together cursorily and in haste to be done with them. Doubtless they will appear very impudent and very strange to the "disciples of La Harpe." But if, by any chance, naked and incomplete as they are, they contribute to start upon the road to the true in art the public, whose education is so advanced, and whose mind has been made ripe by so many remarkable works, both of criticism and original thought, books and journals, let the public follow the impulsion without stopping to think whether it comes from an unknown man, from a voice that speaks without authority, from a work of little merit. It is a copper bell which summons the congregation to the true temple and the presence of the true God.

There is to-day an old literary régime, as well as an old political régime. The last century still weighs heavily upon the new century at almost every point. It oppresses it notably in the matter of criticism. For instance, you will find living men who will repeat to you Voltaire's definition of taste: "Taste is the same thing in poetry that it is in woman's dress." Taste, then, is coquetry. Notable words are those, which depict to admiration the painted, spotted, powdered poetry of the eighteenth century, that literature in petticoats, plumes and falbalas. They constitute an admirable summing up of an epoch with which the greatest geniuses could not come in contact without becoming petty and mean in one respect or another; of a time when Montesquieu could produce, and should have produced as he did, the *Temple de Gnide*, Voltaire the *Temple du Goût*, and Jean-Jacques the *Devin du Village*.

Taste is the common sense of genius. That is something that will soon be demonstrated by criticism of another stamp, a powerful, outspoken, learned criticism, a natural product of the age which is beginning to put forth vigorous shoots beneath the withered branches of the old school. This younger school of criticism, as serious as the other is frivolous, as erudite as the other is ignorant, has already been heard from through the medium of organs that are listened to, and one is sometimes surprised to find even in sheets of less weight excellent articles emanating from it. By coming to the support of all that is meritorious and courageous in the world of letters, it will deliver us from two scourges: decrepit *classicism*, and false *romanticism*, which dares to crouch at the feet of the true. For genius of the modern variety already has its shadow, its feeble copy, its parasite, its *classicist*, which models itself upon it, paints with its colors, wears its livery, picks up its crumbs, and like the *sorcerer's pupil*, with the aid of words retained in its memory, apes its action in many matters of which it has not the secret. Thus it does many idiotic things which its master is often at much pains to repair. But what needs to be destroyed before all else is the old-fashioned false taste. Its rust must be rubbed off the literature of to-day. In vain does it eat into it and tarnish it. It is speaking to a younger generation, a stern, vigorous generation which

does not understand it. The tail of the eighteenth century is still dragging on the ground in the nineteenth; but we young men, who have seen Bonaparte, are not the ones who will take it up and carry it.

The moment is at hand when the new criticism, established upon a broad, deep, solid foundation, will prevail over the old. It will soon be generally understood that writers should be judged, not according to fixed rules, which are entirely out of place in nature and in art, but according to the inimitable principles of the art of composition, and the special laws applicable to their individual peculiarities. The common-sense of the whole world will soon be ashamed of a school of criticism which broke Pierre Corneille upon the wheel, gagged Jean Racine, and rehabilitated John Milton absurdly enough, simply because of the epic code of Père le Bossu. People will consent to form their opinions of a work from the author's standpoint, to look at it with his eyes. They will lay aside,—it is M. de Chateaubriand speaking,—“the pitiful criticism of defects, for the noble and useful criticism of beauties.” It is time that all bright minds should grasp the thread which frequently unites that which we, according to our individual caprice, call *defect* to that which we call *beauty*. Defects, or what we call defects, are very often the inborn, essential, preordained condition of the qualities with which they are connected.

Scit genius, natale comes qui temperat astrum.

Who has ever seen a medal which had not its reverse side? or talent which did not exhibit some shadow upon its brilliancy, some smoke with its flame? Such a blemish can be nothing more than the inseparable consequence of such beauty. That rough coloring, which offends my eye at first glance, completes the effect and imparts piquancy to the whole picture. Efface one and you efface the other. Originality consists in such strokes as that. Genius is necessarily unequal. There are no lofty mountains without deep precipices. Fill up the valley with the mountain, and you have a monotonous steppe, a plateau, the plain of Sablons instead of the Alps, swallows and not eagles.

We must also take into account the weather, the climate, and local influences. The Bible, Homer, sometimes offend by their very sublimity. But who would eliminate a word of either? Our weakness often takes fright at the bold inspirations of genius, because we cannot contemplate objects with such measureless intelligence. Again, there are *faults* which take root only in masterpieces of art; it is given to certain geniuses only to have certain defects. Shakespeare is sometimes reproached for his abuse of metaphysics, for his abuse of wit, for his redundant scenes, for his obscenities, for resorting to the mythological trash which was fashionable in his day, for extravagance, for obscurity, for bad taste, for bombast, for asperity of style. The oak, that giant among trees which we compared to Shakespeare a moment since, and which resembles him in more than one point, has a curious shape, knotted branches, dark foliage, and rough, hard bark; but it is the oak. And it is the oak because of those very peculiarities. If you would have a slender trunk, straight branches, satiny leaves, apply to the pale birch, the hollow elder, the weeping willow; but leave the mighty oak at peace. Do not throw stones at that which gives you shade.

The author of this book knows as well as anyone the numerous and great shortcomings of his works. If it be the fact that he corrects them too rarely, it is because he dislikes to recur to a work that has grown cold. And indeed what has he written that is worth the trouble? The labor he would throw away in correcting the imperfections of his works, he prefers to employ in cleansing his mind of its defects. His method is to correct one work in a succeeding work.

For the rest, whatever may be the treatment bestowed upon his book, he pledges himself not to defend it in whole or in part. If his drama is bad, why attempt to bolster it up? If it is good, what need to defend it? Time will do justice to the book, or to him. The success of the moment concerns no one save the bookseller. If, therefore, the wrath of the critics is aroused by the publication of this effort, he will let them do their worst. What reply should he make to them? He is not of those who speak as the Castilian poet says, *through the mouths of their wounds*:

Por la boca de su herida.

One last word. It will have been noticed that in this somewhat protracted journey through so many different questions, the author has as a general rule abstained from supporting his personal opinions upon texts, citations, authorities. It is not, however, because there was any lack of them.

“If the poet establishes impossibilities according to the rules of his art, he commits a fault unquestionably; but it ceases to be a fault, when by that means he attains the result at which he aimed, for he has found what he sought.” “They mistake for nonsense whatever the weakness of their intellects does not allow them to understand. Especially do they make sport of those marvelous passages, wherein the poet, the better to enforce his argument, departs, if we may say so, from the argument. This precept, which makes it a rule sometimes to disregard rules, is one of the mysteries of the art which it is not easy to make men understand who are absolutely devoid of taste, and whom a sort of uncouthness of mind renders insensible to those things which impress most men.”

Who makes the first of these statements? Aristotle. And who the second? Boileau. These specimens will serve to show that the author of this book might as well as another, shield himself with proper names, and take refuge behind great reputations. But he has chosen to leave that method of argumentation to those who think it invincible and of universal application. For his own part he prefers reasons to authorities: he has always cared more for arms than for coats of arms.

OCTOBER, 1827.

NOTE

¹ That is to say, the Roman Empire from the fall of the Empire of the West to the taking of Constantinople.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

OLIVER CROMWELL
ELIZABETH BOURCHIER
MISTRESS FLETWOOD
LADY FALCONBRIDGE
LADY CLAYPOLE

LADY FRANCES
RICHARD CROMWELL
LIEUTENANT-GENERAL FLETWOOD
MAJOR-GENERAL DESBOROUGH
EARL OF WARWICK

THURLOW
LORD BROGHILL
WHITELOCKE, Commis'ner of the Great Seal
EARL OF CARLISLE
STOUPÉ, Secretary of State
SERGEANT MAYNARD

WILLIAM LENTHALL
COLONEL JEPHSON
COLONEL GRACE
WALLER
SIR CHARLES WOLSELEY
PIERPONT

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL LAMBERT
COLONEL JOYCE
MAJOR-GENERAL HARRISON
LIEUTENANT-GENERAL LUDLOW
COLONEL OVERTON
COLONEL PRIDE
MAJOR WILDMAN

BAREBONES, a currier
GARLAND, M. P.
PLINLIMMON, M. P.
LIVE-TO-RISE-AGAIN JEROBOAM DEMER
PRAISE-GOD PIMPLETON
DEATH-TO-SINNERS PALMER
SYNDERCOMB, a soldier

LORD ORMOND
WILMOT, EARL OF ROCHESTER
LORD DROGHEDA
LORD ROSEBERY
LORD CLIFFORD
SIR PETER DOWNIE
SEDLEY
DAVENANT
DOCTOR JENKINS

SIR RICHARD WILLIS
SIR WILLIAM MURRAY
JOHN MILTON
CARR
MANASSEH-BEN-ISRAEL
TRICK,
GIRAFFE,
GRAMADOCH,
ELESPURU, } Cromwell's four fools

DAME GUGGLIGOY

DUC DE CRÉQUI, French Ambassador	HANNIBAL SESTHEAD, Cousin of the King
MANCINI	of Denmark; HIS TWO PAGES
THEIR RETINUE	THE LORD-MAYOR
DON LUIS DE CARDENAS, Spanish Am-	THE SPEAKER OF THE COMMONS
bassador; HIS RETINUE	THE CLERK OF PARLIAMENT
FILIPPI, Envoy of Christina of Sweden; HIS	AN USHER OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
RETINUE	THE HIGH-SHERIFF
THREE PIEDMONTESE ENVOYS	THE CHAMPION OF ENGLAND AND HIS SUITE
SIX ENVOYS FROM THE UNITED PROVINCES	DOCTOR LOCKYER

THE PUBLIC CRIER; LIVERYMEN; LORDS AND GENTLEMEN; ARTISANS.—THE PROTECTOR'S
 BODY-GUARDS; ARCHERS AND HALBERDIERS; PAGES, SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS, CITIZENS;
 PARLIAMENT; THE MOB.

London—1657.



ACT FIRST

THE CONSPIRATORS

THE "THREE CRANES" TAVERN

Tables and chairs of rough wood. A door at the back of the stage opening upon a public square.
Interior of an old house in the style of the Middle Ages.

SCENE I

LORD ORMOND, disguised as a roundhead, hair cut very short, broad-brimmed sugar-loaf hat, black coat, black serge knee-breeches, high boots. LORD BROGHILL, in fashionable negligé, hat with plumes, slashed satin doublet and knee-breeches, half-boots.

LORD BROGHILL. (He enters through the door at the back, which remains ajar, affording a glimpse of the old houses in the gray of the morning. He holds a letter open in his hand, and is very intent upon its perusal. Lord Ormond is seated at a table in a dark corner.)

"To-morrow, June the twenty-fifth, sixteen hundred fifty-seven, some one whom formerly my Lord Broghill did cherish will await his lordship early in the morning at the

'Three Cranes,' hard by the wine-market, on the street corner."

(He looks about him.)

This is the tavern;—'t is the self-same place that Charles, by God forsaken after Worcester, alone, seeking to save his head from his crown's fate, did choose, here in the heart of London, as a place wherein to hide his head from Cromwell.

(He looks down once more at the letter.)

But whence comes this letter that was handed to me yesterday? The hand in which 't is written . . .

LORD ORMOND (rising).

God preserve Lord Broghill!

LORD BROGHILL (scanning him with a disdainful air from head to foot).

What! is 't thou, my friend, who caustest me to leave my own abode for this besmoked retreat? Tell me thy name. Whence comest thou? and wherefore? What wouldst thou with me? I 've seen this fellow somewhere.

LORD ORMOND.

Lord Broghill!

LORD BROGHILL.

Answer me! varlets of thy kind are made to entertain us at our doors; and to entreat them well is all the honor those in our station owe to those in thine. I find thee over-bold!

LORD ORMOND.

My lord, be not offended, but is this the fitting discourse of a nobleman devoted to the people's interests, a friend of Cromwell?

LORD BROGHILL.

If thou shouldst waken Cromwell, the old Puritan, at such an hour, to change the course of thy ideas he 'd have thee hanged upon a gibbet thirty cubits high.

LORD ORMOND.

Rather than waken him, I hope to send him off to sleep forever!

LORD BROGHILL.

Cromwell, who will ere long be firmly seated on the throne, will find a way to castigate the shameless curs . . .

LORD ORMOND.

His throne's a block, his purple stained with blood. I see in him the Stuart's renegade retainer; you have forgotten that.

LORD BROGHILL.

That look—that voice.—In God's name who are you?

LORD ORMOND.

'T is Broghill asks me! Good my lord, remember you the war in Ireland? Together then we served the king.

LORD BROGHILL.

'T is my Lord Ormond! My old friend, 't is thou!

(He grasps his hands affectionately.)

Thou here in London! and at the very hour when Cromwell doth in triumph take unto himself supreme authority! Great God! A price is set upon thy head. Why, if it should be known . . . What dost thou here, unhappy man?

LORD ORMOND.

My duty.

LORD BROGHILL.

Can it be that I could fail to recognize thee? Ah! But that forbidding air. My lord,—the years,—and more than all that ministerial garb. You are so changed!

LORD ORMOND.

I am less changed than you are, Broghill! You do bend the knee to Cromwell. Broghill cowers at the feet of a false-hearted regicide. I have but changed my coat, but thou, thy heart and soul! Yes, thou, who wert so great in all our battles, thou didst rise so high only to fall so low!

LORD BROGHILL.

Ah! as one vanquished, I do pity you; as one proscribed, I have respect for your misfortune; but this language . . .

LORD ORMOND.

Is as just as it is harsh. But hark ye, thou canst still repair thy error. Be my friend . . .

LORD BROGHILL.

With Cromwell? Yes. I hasten to implore him for thee. I can save thy life, which is proscribed . . .

LORD ORMOND.

Stay! Ask me rather to protect thy head. Thy domineering master, thy protector, thy false king, thy Cromwell, is far nearer his destruction than am I.

LORD BROGHILL.

What do I hear?

LORD ORMOND.

Pray listen. Eaten up with melancholy, weary of the paltry titles of protector and of highness, Cromwell designs at last, seated beneath the royal canopy, to be saluted by the kings of Europe with the name of Majesty. For his part of the booty wherein each one has his share, Cromwell doth choose the bloody heritage of Charles the First. And he shall have it all! his coffin no less surely than his throne. The regicide king in his o'erweening pride will learn how heavy is the crown, and that, though seized upon by force, it oftentimes doth crush the heads that it adorns.

LORD BROGHILL.

What dost thou say?

LORD ORMOND.

I say that on the morrow, at the hour when Westminster shall open wide its doors for this new king, whose consecration will take place in hell, upon the broad steps of the throne, usurped but for an instant, thou wilt see him fall a bleeding mass beneath our swords.

LORD BROGHILL.

Insensate fool! his escort is the army, and that moving wall of iron always doth encompass him about. Dost thou so much as know the number of his guards? How will you pierce three rows of halberds, and his heavy infantry, his heralds and his clubmen, his black musketeers and his red cuirassiers?

LORD ORMOND.

They are with us.

LORD BROGHILL.

Upon what hope is thy reliance placed? To think of cavaliers and roundheads fighting side by side!

LORD ORMOND.

On this spot a moment hence thou 'lt see with thine own eyes the king's men mingling with the partisans of Parliament. The gloomy Puritans give ear to the voice of their fanaticism. They will have no more of Oliver as king than Charles. If Cromwell doth assume the crown, Cromwell will die beneath their swords. His rival and their leader, Lambert, is in league with us; he even dares aspire to fill Cromwell's place, but we will look to that hereafter! Spanish and Flemish gold have made a many friends for us within these walls. In fine, the game is in our hands, and we will cast the die.

LORD BROGHILL.

Cromwell is very shrewd! You're playing for your head.

LORD ORMOND.

God knows for whom to-morrow's like to be a day of merry-making. Our plot is certain of success, Broghill. This morning Rochester is to bring hither Sedley, Jenkins, Clifford, Davenant the poet, who will make known to us the secret wishes of the king; to the same meeting Carr will come and Harrison, Sir Richard Willis . . .

LORD BROGHILL.

But they are all in prison. They are Cromwell's enemies and by him held in close confinement in the Tower of London.

LORD ORMOND.

A single word will prove thee wrong therein. We reckon in our ranks, as earnest as ourselves, though from another cause, to make an end of Oliver, the keeper of the Tower, Barkshead, the regicide, whom hope of pardon hath induced to serve our cause. Thou seest with what skill the plot is laid. In a vast net thy Cromwell is immeshed. And he will not escape. The factions, all united for a common end, have digged a pit beneath the throne he would ascend. For this have I come from the continent. I fain would save thee, Broghill; here and now I call upon thee in the name of Charles the Second, my liege lord, to say if thou wilt live his faithful subject, or wilt die a traitor?

LORD BROGHILL.

'Sdeath! what sayest thou?

LORD ORMOND.

Resume thy place beneath the royal banner.

LORD BROGHILL.

Ah! I was a worthy, loyal subject, Ormond; for our king, in the late civil wars, I took strong castles, I defended cities, and from having been a soldier of the Stuarts, I became, by virtue of my cruel destiny, a courtier of Cromwell! Leave to his wretched fate a wretched renegade, dear Ormond; now do thou listen, and be thou my judge. 'T was while we were at war with Parliament. I came to London to equip a regiment; I was in hiding as thou art, a price was on my head. One day a stranger sought me out; 't was Cromwell. My life was in his hands. He

saved me. For him I forgot my duty; he took full possession of me. Soon,—how shall I tell thee?—I became, like him, a rebel and a sacrilegious knave; my arm lends aid to his republicans, and fights against my king, for whom it first was raised. Since then, Cromwell has made of me one of his peers, lieutenant-general of his artillery, and sworn me of his Privy Council. Thus, raised to high station at his court by his great favor, if he falls, I too am like to fall beside him; and I cannot, rebel as I am against my lawful king, how great soe'er the love that binds me to his noble family, return to my allegiance without treachery.

LORD ORMOND.

O sad result and frequent of our civil wars! Great God! for what does virtue count in politics? How many owe their error to their cruel fate! How many seem upright, who are but fortunate! Broghill! help us to break the yoke that crushes us; prove thy repentance!

LORD BROGHILL.

What! by a new crime? Nay, I may be, my friend, if not thy complice, a sure confidant at least of thy dread secret; but no more than that. Be it my lot, a neutral party in this conflict, to abide thy triumph, or to break thy fall; whoever be the victor, faithful to both, to die with Cromwell, or to plead with him for thee.

LORD ORMOND.

What! hold thy tongue and hold thy hand as well! so wouldst thou break thy faith to Cromwell without serving thy true master. Be a sincere friend or sincere foe, and seek not to remain half traitor and half true! Denounce me rather!

LORD BROGHILL (proudly).

Wert thou not proscribed, thou 'ldst give me satisfaction for that word, my lord!

LORD ORMOND (*offering his hand*).

Dear Broghill, pardon me, I pray you! I am an old soldier, and for twenty years, faithful to the king, have done my duty. Well-nigh all my battles, well-nigh all my services are writ upon my body with great scars; from more than one great leader have I taken lessons, from Prince Rupert and the Marquis of Montrose! I have commanded without arrogance, obeyed without a murmur; 'neath my helmet and my coat of mail, I have grown old and gray; I have seen Strafford die, and Derby; I have seen Dunbar, Tredagh, Worcester and Naseby, combats between the only arms on earth that could uphold or overthrow the throne of England; that throne, shaken to its foundations on the battle-field, I have seen totter to its fall; I have made war on ranters, saints and preachers; and my hand, inured to unremitting combat, knows how many blows it takes to dull a sword. Ah well! at last the end draws near of all my labor; Cromwell's tale is told! Soon a new day will dawn! But must my joy be marred, my glory poisoned because my victory must mean the death of an old friend? Comrade, remember that we both have bathed our venturous swords in the same blood, and both have breathed the dust of the same battles. Broghill, for the second time,

and this the last, I ask thee, in the name of thy true king's good pleasure, if thou wilt live a loyal subject, or wilt die in thy disloyalty? Reflect. One hour will Ormond wait for thy reply.

(*He writes a few words upon a paper, and offers it to Broghill.*)

Here is the borrowed name I bear, my secret dwelling-place.

LORD BROGHILL (*pushing back the paper*).

Nay! tell it not to me! I know too much e'en now. My friend, the same tent long did shelter us, I know, but none the less my destiny must be fulfilled. Farewell, I will not be informer or accomplice. I will forget all this that thou hast said. But list, I pray thee, to a word of counsel. Art thou certain of success in such an undertaking? Naught escapes the eye of Cromwell. His keen glance surveys all Europe, and he holds all Europe in the hollow of his hand. And when thy arm doth seek where thou mayest strike at him, perchance he holds the cord that moves thy arm. Ormond, beware!

LORD ORMOND (*in an injured tone*).

Lord Broghill, leave me now, I beg. I kiss your lordship's hand.

(*Exit Lord Broghill through the door at the back of the stage; the door closes behind him.*)

SCENE II

LORD ORMOND (alone).

I 'll think no more of him!

(He resumes his seat and seems to be lost in thought. While he is musing, a voice is heard, coming gradually nearer, singing the following lines to a lively air.)

A soldier, stern-faced wight,
A page detains one night,
A page of roguish bearing.
—My bonny page, beware,
Whither so early faring,
When the streets deserted are,
Yon satin doublet wearing?

Beneath my cloak I bear
A long sword and guitar:
And a tryst to keep I'm out, sir.
I many a rebel tame,
And many a husband flout, sir:
My guitar is for the dame,
And my sword for the jealous lout, sir.

(The singing ceases for a moment.)

(Someone knocks at the door at the back of the stage. Then the voice resumes.)

But the sentry with a frown
From his lofty tower looked down,
And thus to the page made answer:
—Fair page, I trust you not;
Why wake before the dawn, sir?
'T is rather for war, I wot,
Than to put your heart in pawn, sir.

(The knocking is repeated, more loudly than before.)

LORD ORMOND (rising to open the door).

Who sings thus? 't is some fool, or
Rochester.

(He opens the door and looks into the street.)

Himself. Good lack! he 's scribbling
there upon his knee.

(Lord Rochester enters gaily with a pencil and paper
in his hand.)

SCENE III

LORD ORMOND, LORD ROCHESTER. (The latter is dressed in a very elegant costume, laden with jewels and ribbons, beneath a puritanical cloak of coarse drab cloth: the typical roundhead hat with a broad crown, which but partly hides his blonde hair, a lock of which protrudes behind his ears, according to the fashion in vogue among the young cavaliers of the period.)

LORD ROCHESTER (with a careless nod).

Pardon, my lord. I was inditing my new ballad.—I must tell you . . .

(He begins to write upon his knee.)

God be with your Grace!—I' faith I find it hard to see. You are awaiting our good friends? What think you of the weather?

(He sings.)

A soldier, stern-faced wight,
A page detains one night . . .

For our instruction exile has its value.
'T is an old French air I learned at Paris.

LORD ORMOND (shaking his head).

I fear me that the soldier stopped the bonny page for good and all.

LORD ROCHESTER (looking at his paper).

Ah yes! the rest is at the bottom of the page.

(He gives his hand to Lord Ormond.)

As always, first to reach the rendezvous!—
What of our friends?—Would you prefer, my lord, that I had written:

A soldier, stern of eye,
Detains as he passes by,
A page of roguish bearing . . .

instead of

A soldier, stern-faced wight,
A page detains one night,
A page, etc.?

The repetition of *a page* lacks not a certain charm, what sayest thou? The French . . .

LORD ORMOND.

My lord, I cry your mercy. My poor wit was not designed to criticize such talent.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Good, my lord, I hold you for a most judicious judge. To prove it to your lordship, I will read a new quatrain.

(He poses, and begins in a declamatory tone.)

“Divine Egeria!”

(He interrupts himself.)

I pray you, guess to whom it is addressed.

LORD ORMOND.

My lord, methinks the time for jesting has long past.

(Aside.)

Body of God! Charles is as mad as he, to send him here as my coadjutor!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Ah! but 't is most serious, and not the least deserving of my quatrains. And withal, it is addressed to such a charming subject! 'T is to Frances Cromwell!

LORD ORMOND.

Frances Cromwell!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Even so! I'm dead in love with her.

LORD ORMOND.

She is the youngest child of Cromwell?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Aye, of Cromwell! By my soul, she's fair! Fair, do I say? A very angel in good sooth!

LORD ORMOND.

God save the mark! Lord Rochester in love with . . .

LORD ROCHESTER.

Frances Cromwell. By your bewilderment 't is easy to divine that you've not seen this pearl of loveliness. Sweet seventeen, black hair, proud bearing, white as any lily, and such lovely hands! and such bewitching eyes! My lord, a sylph! a nymph! a fairy! I first did see her yesterday. Her head-dress was awry; no matter! there's nothing that doth not become her! 'T is said that she did come last month to London, and that she was reared by an old aunt far from her father's house, wherefore staunch loyalty is graven in her heart, and she doth love the king.

LORD ORMOND.

Pure fiction, Rochester! Where saw you her?

LORD ROCHESTER.

At Westminster, at the regal banquet given by the city to old Cromwell yesterday. May God confound him! I was curious to see the Lord Protector. But, upon drawing near the elevated platform where he sat, when I saw Frances, beautiful and modest, like one turned to stone, or charmed, I stood, and saw no other. Vainly did the crowd push me this way and that; my eye moved not from the one object; nor when I left the banquet-hall could I have

told if Cromwell, when he speaks, doth stoop or raise his head, or if his brow's too low, his nose too long, or if he's dull or lively, fair or dark, ill-favored or well-favored. I did see in all the throng one woman, naught beside, and since that sight, my lord, upon my soul, I'm mad!

LORD ORMOND.

I do believe you are.

LORD ROCHESTER.

This is my madrigal. 'T is 'in the latest style . . .

LORD ORMOND.

It's all the same to me.

LORD ROCHESTER.

The same! that may not be. You know full well that Shakespeare is a savage, Withers a great man. Is there in all *Macbeth* a single roundelay? The English style yields to the French; the faculty . . .

LORD ORMOND (aside).

A murrain on the French style and the English style! The devil take the quatrain! His madness is past remedy!

(Aloud.)

My lord, your pardon. To speak plainly, it were better far that you, at such a moment, should advise with me, should tell me where we stand, how many gentlemen are like to join us at the rendezvous, and if we may expect from Lambert aid in aught but name, than waste your time in singing madrigals to Cromwell's daughters!

LORD ROCHESTER.

My lord is overwarm. Methinks I may, without disloyalty, look sweet upon a maid.

LORD ORMOND.

And on the father, too?

LORD ROCHESTER

What, are you vexed, my lord? Upon my soul, I know not why. My story surely would amuse the king. I still make war on Cromwell through his daughter. Furthermore, with him I need stand on no ceremony; for, albeit we have never met, we had at the same time for mistress Lady Dysart, who, the scandal at an end, is soon to marry good Lord Lauderdale.

LORD ORMOND.

I would not have believed that Cromwell could be slandered; but his life is pure; wherefore deny it? His are the austere morals of a true reformer.

LORD ROCHESTER (laughing).

So! but his austerity 's a cloak for many mysteries; and the old hypocrite has proved more ways than one that Puritans are human. By your leave, return we to the quatrain.

LORD ORMOND (aside).

By St. George! Still he pursues me with his eternal quatrain on his lips!

(Aloud and solemnly.)

Hark ye, Lord Rochester; you still are young, and I am growing old, my friend. Traditions of the days of chivalry are ever in my thoughts. And therefore do I dare to say to you, my lord, that all these quatrains, sonnets, madrigals, ballads and roundelays, which entertain Parisian loiterers, do very well, like many another thing by us despised, for citizens and would-be gentlemen. My lord,

the lawyers write them, but your peers would blush to scribble madrigals and quatrains. You are of noble birth, my lord, and of most ancient family. Your 'scutcheon bears, if I do well remember, an earl's coronet, with this device: *Aut nunquam aut semper*. I am but little versed in Latin, to say truth, but this device, in English, may be rendered thus: "Sustain the king, maintain your feudal rights, and write no madrigals or roundelays; leave such diversions for the common people." So, my lord, be mindful of the hereditary caste, and do no more a thing the last created baronet would scorn to do, or country bumpkin, with his iron-hook and blunderbuss! Have done with verses!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Heaven save us! 't is a decree in form! I grant you I have sinned beyond redemption. But, 'mongst other rhymers, all of lowest station, I have for my accomplice Armand Duplesses Richelieu, the poet-cardinal; and why, in God's name, should my tongue be still? The royal unicorn, the English lion would none the less uphold my dual shield, though I should still write madrigals and chansons!

(Aside.)

The good old gentleman 's a very bull-dog in his present temper.

(He looks out the door, and shouts.)

Ah! come hither, Davenant, and change the tenor of our dialogue!

(Enters Davenant. A simple black costume, ample cloak and broad-brimmed hat.)

SCENE IV

LORD ORMOND, LORD ROCHESTER, DAVENANT.

LORD ROCHESTER (running to meet Davenant).

Dear poet, I await you here to read a quatrain to you.

DAVENANT (saluting them both).

A far different errand brings me here. My lords, may God be with you!

LORD ORMOND.

You do bring the king's commands from Germany?

DAVENANT.

Yes, I come from Cologne.

LORD ORMOND.

And have you seen the king?

DAVENANT.

No. But I had speech of his Majesty.

LORD ORMOND.

I' faith, I do not understand you.

DAVENANT.

Herein lies the mystery. Ere I was given leave to take my leave of England, Cromwell sent for me. He bade me promise on my word of honor not to see the king. I promised. But no sooner had I reached Cologne than I bethought me of the tricks I learned in Gascony; and thereupon I wrote and begged the king to suffer me to be admitted to his room at night without a light.

LORD ROCHESTER (laughing).

Upon my word!

DAVENANT (to Lord Ormond).

His Majesty, who deigned to grant my prayer, did talk with me, and honor me with his commands for you; thus, faithful to my double duty, I did succeed in speaking with the king, although I saw him not.

LORD ROCHESTER (laughing more heartily than ever).

Ah! Davenant! the ruse was well conceived. 'T is not the least amusing of your comedies.

LORD ORMOND (in an undertone to Rochester).

Amusing, do you say? I cannot understand such trickery in such a matter. Poets' oaths, I know are deemed of little value; but these subtleties, the which I call by a far different name, would fail to satisfy a gentleman's ideas of honor.

(To Davenant.)

What of the king's command?

DAVENANT.

I have it always with me in my hat in a small velvet bag. At all events I may be sure that there no one will take it from me.

(He takes from his hat a bag of crimson velvet, draws forth a sealed parchment, and hands it to Lord Ormond, who receives it on his knees, and opens it after kissing it respectfully.)

LORD ROCHESTER (aside to Davenant).

While he 's reading that, I will repeat some verses that . . .

LORD ORMOND (reading, half aloud, half to himself).

"James Butler, Earl of Ormond, our loyal, trusty servitor; 't is most essential that Lord Rochester should find a way to Cromwell's presence at Whitehall."

LORD ROCHESTER.

Delightful! Is it the king's wish that I seduce his daughter?

(To Davenant.)

My quatrain sings her charms.

LORD ORMOND (reading on).

"There he must mingle a narcotic with the wine he drinks,—and when he is asleep, he must be seized, and brought to us alive. We will do justice on him. Have all confidence in Davenant. Such is our will.

"CHARLES REX."

(He returns the letter, after repeating the same ceremonial, to Davenant, who kisses it and replaces it in the velvet bag, which he conceals in his hat.)

'T is vastly easier to say than do, in sooth. How in God's name is Rochester to gain access to Cromwell? We must needs be clever to accomplish that!

DAVENANT.

I know an old licentiate in Cromwell's service, one John Milton, secretary and interpreter, a tolerable clerk, but wretched poet, and quite blind.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Who? Milton, friend of the king's murderers, who wrote the *Iconoclast*, and God knows what beside? The obscure antagonist of the illustrious Saumaise?

DAVENANT.

I 'm well content to be a friend of his to-day. The protector has no chaplain, I believe.

(Pointing to Rochester.)

My lord through Milton may obtain that post.

LORD ORMOND (laughing).

A chaplain! Rochester! a most amusing metamorphosis!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Why not, my lord? I can at need assume a comic rôle, and I have played the robber—you know, Davenant?—in the *Roi Bucheron*. I 'll undertake the part of an old Puritan divine; I need do no more than preach myself into a sweat, and talk of nothing but the dragon, and the golden calf, the flutes of Jezebel, and the Caves of Endor. Moreover, 't is a certain means of having free access to Cromwell.

DAVENANT. (He sits down at a table and writes a note.)

With this line from me, my lord, I promise you that Milton will commend you to the old devil, and that the devil's chaplain you will be.

LORD ROCHESTER.

I shall see Frances!

(He puts out his hand eagerly for Davenant's letter.)

DAVENANT.

Give me time, I pray, to fold it.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Frances!

LORD ORMOND (to Rochester).

For her sake commit no folly.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Nay, nay, nay!

(Aside.)

If I could slip my quatrain in her hand! A quatrain sometimes puts affairs in trim.

(Aloud to Davenant.)

Once in the citadel, what must I do?

DAVENANT (handing him a phial).

This phial doth contain a powerful narcotic. The sovereign that is to be is always served at night with hippocras, wherein a sprig of rosemary is dipped. This powder pour therein, and bribe the guard at the park gate.

(To Ormond.)

The rest is our affair.

LORD ORMOND.

But wherefore doth the king desire Cromwell to be spirited away to-night, when he 's to die to-morrow? His own friends have sworn that he must die.

DAVENANT.

The king would save him from the blows of these same Puritans. He fain would fight his battles without them. Moreover, many times 't is well to have a living enemy for hostage.

LORD ROCHESTER.

What of the wherewithal?

DAVENANT.

A brig which has on board a sum of gold to be transmitted to us, lies in the Thames; and to provide against emergencies, Manasseh, vile Jew dog, opens a generous credit for our benefit at twelve per cent.

LORD ORMOND.

'T is well.

DAVENANT.

Let us not put an end to our alliance with the roundheads. 'T is a deep-rooted oak we seek to overthrow. Retain we their concurrence; so may the old fox, if he escapes our nets, fall 'neath their poniards.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Davenant, dear Davenant, well said! Sonorous words i' faith! 'T is well to deal in

metaphors like a true poet! Cromwell an *oak* and *fox* in the same breath! 't is fine indeed. And a fox *poniarded*! You are the bright star of our English Pindus! Wherefore, master mine, I challenge your decree . . .

LORD ORMOND (aside).

The quatrain is about to reappear.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Tonching some verses that I wrote . . .

LORD ORMOND.

My lord, is this the place?

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

How narrow-minded all these great lords be! If haply one of them have wit, he brings dishonor on his caste.

DAVENANT (to Rochester).

My lord, when Charles the Second dwells in Windsor Castle, you shall recite your lines, and we will bring together here on these same benches, Wither, Waller and Saint-Albans. By your leave, my lord, I will forego the pleasure now.

LORD ORMOND.

Yes, let us make our plans in peace!

(To Davenant.)

'T was spoken like a prince!

(Aside.)

Wilmot should die of shame. Davenant, the poetaster, is less mad than he.

LORD ROCHESTER (to Davenant).

You will not listen?

DAVENANT.

Why, I dare believe that my Lord Rochester himself will spare me. We have many matters to discuss touching our plot.

LORD ROCHESTER.

You fancy that my quatrain is poor trash !
Because I have not written *tragic comedies* !
and *masques* ! So be it, sirrah ! . . .

(Aside to Lord Ormond.)

Rhapsodies ! 'T is jealousy that leads him
to refuse !

DAVENANT.

How now ! My lord is wroth ?

LORD ROCHESTER.

The devil take you ! leave me !

DAVENANT.

Ah ! I did not think to wound you, on my
life !

LORD ORMOND.

My lord, I pray you . . .

LORD ROCHESTER (turning away).

Pride !

DAVENANT.

Vouchsafe, my lord . . .

LORD ROCHESTER (waving him aside).

Rank envy !

LORD ORMOND.

By Saint-George ! to gentle measures I do
not incline. A single drop of water causes a
full vase to overflow. My lord, the veriest
fop that walks the Paris streets, the sorriest
coxcomb of the Place Royale, with ostrich
feathers waving in his hat, with tufted wig
and flaring boots, lace band, and satin
shoulder-knots, can boast a mind less full
of balderdash than yours !

LORD ROCHESTER (in a rage).

My lord, you 're not my father ! Your gray
hairs do naught avail to justify your words.
Your speech is young and makes us one in
age. By God, you owe me satisfaction for
this insult !

LORD ORMOND.

With all my heart ! Out with your sword,
my spark.

(They both draw their swords.)

'Pon honor ! I do think no more of him
than of a slender reed !

(They cross swords.)

DAVENANT (throwing himself between them).

My lords ! what means this ? Peace ! Put
up your swords !

LORD ROCHESTER (lunging).

My friend, peace is a good thing, but war
is better yet.

DAVENANT (still struggling to separate them).

Suppose the night-watch heard you ?

(Someone knocks at the door.)

Someone knocks, I think.

(Londer knocking.)

My lords, in God's name !

(They continue to fight.)

In the king's name !

(They pause and lower their swords. The knocking
is repeated.)

Ah ! all is lost ! Mayhap the guard is
summoned. Peace !

(The two noblemen replace their swords in the
scabbards, resume their broad-brimmed hats, and
wrap themselves in their cloaks.)

(More knocking. Davenant opens the door.)

SCENE V

THE SAME: CARR, in the typical costume of a roundhead.

(He stops upon the threshold, and gravely salutes the three cavaliers with a wave of his hand, without removing his hat.)

CARR.

Is not this the place, my brethren, where the saints do congregate?

DAVENANT (returning his salute).

It is.

(Aside to Lord Ormond.)

These cursed Puritans address each other thus.

(Aloud to Carr.)

God's blessing on you, brother; welcome to this conventicle.

(Carr walks slowly forward.)

LORD ORMOND (aside to Rochester).

Our bellicose attack was most ridiculous, my lord. Let us stop here. Mine was the blame. Let us be friends.

LORD ROCHESTER (bowing).

My lord, your will 's my law.

LORD ORMOND.

Henceforth let us think only of the king, whose service doth demand that you and I should work in harmony.

LORD ROCHESTER.

My lord, it is my pleasure, as it is my duty.

(They shake hands.)

God in heaven! is it not enough to have incurred,—O sad result of our intestine wars!

—proscription, banishment and condemnation; to have a price set on one's head *et cætera*,

(He points to the clothes in which he is disguised.) and have upon one's person this felt hat and sombre cloak?

CARR. (He comes forward a few steps, very slowly, clasps his hands upon his breast, looks up at the ceiling, then scrutinizes the three cavaliers, one after another.)

Continue, brethren! When I come into the meeting-house, I am the most unworthy guest around the sacred board. Let no one rise to greet old Carr! I gather that the noise your voices wafted to my ears without was a fraternal strife with spiritual arms.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Damnation!

CARR (continuing).

To such conflicts I am well inured; continue, for they give the spirit food.

LORD ROCHESTER (in an undertone to Davenant).

Or give it wings.

DAVENANT (in the same tone).

Peace, peace, my lord!

CARR.

'T is written: "Go throughout the world, and preach my word!"

LORD ROCHESTER (aside to Davenant).

I'll grasp the opportunity to study my new rôle of chaplain.

CARR (after a pause).

I did well deserve the wrath of the Long Parliament. For seven years I languished in the Tower, bewailing our lost liberties—lost under Cromwell's rule. This morning was my door thrown open, and my jailer said to me: "At the *Three Cranes* thy friends await thee. Israel convokes her tribes; at last is Cromwell to be overthrown, and the abuses to be done away. Begone!" I went, and journeyed to your hospitable door, as Jacob once did journey into Mesopotamia. All hail! my soul awaits the manna of your words, as the dry earth awaits the rain from heaven. Malediction doth defile me, and encompass me about. Then, brethren, wash me clean with hyssop; for if your eyes turn not their light upon me, I shall be like unto one dead, who goeth down into the tomb!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside to Davenant).

What ghastly jargon!

DAVENANT (aside to Rochester).

'T is from the Apocalypse.

CARR.

My soul doth thirst for light.

LORD ROCHESTER.

In God's name put an end to the eclipse!

LORD ORMOND (aside to Davenant).

I gather, 'mid this wilderness of *thens* and *fors*, that he comes hither from the Tower, and that his name is Carr. 'T is one of the conspirators whom Barkstead sends us. Carr is a sectary, an old bird of prey. In concert with Strahan, in the rebellion, he did separate his forces from the forces of the Parliament.

The Parliament consigned him to the Tower. But, Master Davenant, solve me this riddle, if you can; he curses Cromwell, for that he did treasonably dissolve the Parliament that ordered him to prison.

DAVENANT (in an undertone).

Is he an Independent of the common sort? A Ranter? A Socinian?

LORD ORMOND (in an undertone).

No, but a millenarian. 'T is his belief that for a thousand years the saints will hold the reins of government in their own hands. The saints are friends.

CARR (who seems to have fallen into a sort of trance).

My brethren, I have suffered bitterly! I was forgotten in my dark abode as they who have been dead a hundred years do rot forgotten in their sepulchres; the Parliament, that I myself offended, by Cromwell had been driven forth; and I, in chains, bewailed the fate of England, like the pelican beside the solitary lake. My own fate I bewailed! My brow was scorched, my right arm withered by the fire of sin; and I, accursed by the same God whom I proclaim, was like unto the half-consumed brand. Ah! I have wept so much, ye lambs of the blest flock, that all my bones are burned, my flesh cleaves unto them. But now, in his good time, the Lord doth pity me and lift me up. Upon the pillar of the temple doth he whet my blade. He soon will strike down Cromwell, and expel from Zion the abomination of desolation!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside to Davenant).

By my name! this is a most original harangue!

CARR.

Among you I resume my virgin robe.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

God save the mark!

CARR.

My footsteps lead unto the narrow path,
and glorify yourselves, ye men of upright life.
The thousand years have come. The saints
whom God upholds, from Gog to Magog, are
to rule the world. And ye are saints!

LORD ROCHESTER (courteously).

Fair sir, you do us honor.

CARR (with enthusiasm).

Zion's stones are dear unto the Lord.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Good lack! that 's something like!

CARR.

Unless my God doth lay his hand upon me,
I am like one dumb, who opens not his
mouth. To you mine ear will ever listen, for
in your speech the manna from on high
abounds!

(Pointing to Lord Ormond.)

Were you at variance in your opinions?
Tell me upon what text your blessed contro-
versy turned?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Just now, good sir? It was upon a
verse . . .

(Aside.)

Good lack! what if my quatrain chanced to
please him? Even now he listens to me with
unheard-of interest! Where lives the poet
who could see at hand an ear so wide open,
without throwing verses in? I 'll risk the
madrigal, come what come may! But first
let 's make him drink. For 't is well known
that sometimes even our most sour-visaged
Puritans smooth out their wrinkles when they
hear the glasses clink.

(Aloud.)

Pray, are you not athirst, fair sir?

CARR.

Nay, never! neither thirst nor hunger do I
know! for I do feed on ashes, friend, as they
were bread.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

If that 's the way he dines, he may e'en
dine alone. No matter!

(Aloud.)

Ho there! boy!

(A waiter appears.)

A jug of muscadine, of wine, of hippocras!

(The waiter places several jugs and two pewter goblets
on a table. Carr and Rochester seat themselves.
Carr fills a goblet and offers it to Rochester, who
continues.)

Were you not asking,—gramercy!—what
text we were discussing here a moment since?
It was a quatrain . . .

CARR.

'T was a quatrain?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Marry, yes.

CARR.

A quatrain! what is that?

LORD ROCHESTER.

'T is—something like a psalm.

CARR.

Ah! I will listen then.

LORD ROCHESTER.

And tell me, after, what you think of it.—
"Divine Egeria!"—Ah! she to whom these
verses are addressed was christened Frances;
but that vulgar name would fill the ear but
poorly at the end of a love ballad! It must
be changed. I hesitated long betwixt Griselda
and Parthenia, but chose at last the more
melodious name, Egeria; she was the cherished
nymph of the wise Numa. He was a law-
maker, I am of Parliament: therefore that

choice seemed more felicitous. Did I not well? Be you my judge. But listen to my amorous epigram.

(He assumes a languishing, killing attitude.)

"Divine Egeria! you set my heart ablaze!
Your eyes, wherein Dan Cupid lights his conquering
fire,
Two gleaming mirrors are, which concentrate the rays
Of my poor heart's consuming pyre."

What say you to it?

(Carr, who listens at first with interest, then with frowning displeasure, rises in a rage, and overturns the table.)

CARR.

Demons! damnation! malediction! May Heaven and all the saints forgive me if I swear! But how can I sit coolly by and hear the flood of ribaldry roar at my side? Avaunt! back, Edomite! back, Midianite! avaunt, Amalekite!

LORD ROCHESTER (laughing).

Great God! what store of rhymes in *ite*!—
Another odd fish this, more laughable than Ormond!

CARR (indignantly).

Thou, like Satan, didst lead me to the mountain top, thy tongue didst say to me: "Thou hast but now come forth after a season of stern deprivation; art thou athirst? I lay the whole earth at thy feet."

LORD ROCHESTER.

I did but offer you a cup of wine.

CARR.

I listened to his voice as if he were a spirit from on high! My soul was opened to the words that fell from his deceitful lips, even as a rose of Sharon to the drops of dew! Instead of the pure, stainless treasures of a guileless, tranquil heart, a gaping wound he shows to me!

LORD ROCHESTER.

A wound? a quatrain!

CARR (working himself into a frenzy).

Aye, a frightful wound, wherein are to be seen episcopacy, popery and schism, harlotry and lust! A poisoned ulcer wherein Moloch-Cupid with Astarte voids his filth!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Pardon! 't is not Astarte but Egeria, my good sir.

CARR.

Thy mouth gives forth a poison that doth parch my soul. Get ye behind me, all ye fornicators, ye who do iniquity! My bones you wither even to their marrow. But the saints will triumph! Your accursed brood will not make them bow down like slender reeds; and when the mighty floods o'erflow their banks at last, they will not reach their feet!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Thou drivelest! What purpose, in that case do those great boots thou wearest serve? If it rains not upon thee, why these broad-brimmed hats?

CARR (bitterly).

A fitting question from a son of Belial!

(At this moment Rochester's cloak falls apart and discovers his rich costume, covered with ribbons, love-knots and jewelry. Carr casts a scandalized glance at it, and continues.)

How now! ah yes! a sorcerer! a sphinx with a man's face, decked out with gawds as were of old the men of Sodom! Not otherwise does Satan wear his doublet. So does he flaunt about with ruffles at his wrists, and hides his cloven hoof, for fear it might be seen, with shoes beribboned and with silken hose, and wears his garter well above the knee! These rings and jewels, consecrate to Vishnu, are but so many amulets of Nabo, the false god; and, for that hell may laugh at all

this trumpery, behind his ear unblushing he
displays the abomination of the lover's lock!

LORD ORMOND.

Ye fools!

CARR (whose wrath reaches its climax).

Nay, nay, these are no saints!

LORD ROCHESTER (laughing).

Dost thou renounce the title?

CARR.

'T is a club of fiends, a witches' dance of
Papists! They are ungodly cavaliers! I
must away!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Farewell, beloved.

CARR (striding toward the door).

In this house my feet do tread upon the
coals of hell!

SCENE VI

THE SAME: COLONEL JOYCE, MAJOR-GENERAL HARRISON, BAREBONES, the Carrier, LIEUTENANT-GENERAL LUDLOW, COLONEL OVERTON, COLONEL PRIDE, SYNDERCOMB, MAJOR WILDMAN, GARLAND and PLINLIMMON, Members of Parliament, and other Puritans.

(They enter in procession, wrapped in their cloaks. Hats turned down, high boots, and long swords, which raise the skirts of their cloaks behind.)

JOYCE (detaining Carr).

How now! where goest thou? Dost thou go hence when we arrive?

CARR.

Joyce, thou 'rt deceived! step not thy foot in Nineveh! Away from this accursed spot! These men are cavaliers, not saints! Out on them! Treason!

JOYCE (in an undertone to Carr).

But these cavaliers, my old friend Carr, will help us gain our ends. Their arms we needs must use, in lack of others. They are our confederates.

CARR.

Death to the king's faction! No alliance with the sons of Belial!

JOYCE (to Overton).

He still has much to learn.

(To Carr.)

Go to! remain with us! remain!

CARR (yielding, with a frowning face).

Yes, I remain, to save you from the rank contagion of their touch.

(The three cavaliers have seated themselves at a table at the right of the stage. The Puritans, standing in a group at the left, converse together in whispers, casting glances of bitter hatred at the cavaliers from time to time. Throughout the following scenes, there is supposed to be such a distance between the two groups of cavaliers that what is said in one group is not necessarily overheard by the other. Carr alone seems to keep his eyes fixed constantly upon the cavaliers, but he stands a little apart from the other roundheads.)

LORD ORMOND (aside to Davenant).

That poltroon Lambert is unconscionably slow. It must be that he saw the scaffold in a dream last night.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside to the other two).

Our honest friends the saints do wear a most forbidding mien! We are but three, and, by Saint Paul! their number is disquieting.

(He looks toward the door.)

But here are reinforcements: Sedley,—Rosebery,—Drogheda,—Clifford.

LORD ORMOND (rising).

And Jenkins, the illustrious, to whom the tyrant listens, the while he persecutes him for his virtue, which he much doth dread!

SCENE VII

THE SAME: SEDLEY, LORD DROGHEDA, LORD ROSEBERY, SIR PETER DOWNIE, LORD CLIFFORD, cavaliers all, enveloped in cloaks, and wearing puritanical hats; DOCTOR JENKINS, an old man, dressed in black, and other Royalists.

(The cavaliers rush tumultuously in through the door at the back of the stage; Doctor Jenkins alone maintains a stern, sedate demeanor.)

LORD ROSEBERY (gaily).

Rochester! Lord Ormond! Davenant!
how very warm it is!

CARR (in a corner, aside).

Lord Ormond! Rochester!

LORD ORMOND (aside to Rosebery, in a vexed tone).

I prithee call our names less loudly.

LORD ROSEBERY (in an undertone, with a side-long glance at the roundheads).

Ah! I saw not yonder crows.

LORD ORMOND (aside to Rosebery).

Beware, my lord, lest peradventure they do
some day feed on you!

(The cavaliers approach the table, at which Rochester, Ormond and Davenant are seated. They espy the table and the pewter mugs overturned by Carr.)

LORD CLIFFORD (with a jovial air).

What! tables overturned already? operations have begun, 't would seem? Two glasses for the three? Which one of you doth fast? Let us repair the ruin you have wrought.

(He raises the table and calls a waiter, who covers it with fresh jugs of wine and beer. The young cavaliers at once take seats about it.)

I fain would eat and drink.

CARR (aside, indignantly).

They have no mouths for aught but eating! Pagans that they are! *Hunger and thirst!* is their eternal song. They 're shrouded in their carnal appetites!

SCENE VIII

THE SAME : SIR RICHARD WILLIS, in the costume of the older generation of cavaliers ; white beard ; apparently in pain.

LORD ORMOND.

Sir Richard Willis !

(All the cavaliers rise and go to meet him. He seems to have great difficulty in walking. Rosebery and Rochester offer him the support of their arms.)

SIR RICHARD WILLIS (to the cavaliers about him).

Freed from his chains for a brief space, dear friends, old Richard to your trysting-place doth drag his weary limbs. Alas ! in me you see a weak old man, who suffers never-ending torture from the persecution that doth follow him. My eyes are all unwonted to the light, so zealously doth Cromwell study to torment me !

LORD ORMOND.

Poor old friend !

SIR RICHARD WILLIS.

Nay, do not pity me, for though I 'm driven step by step into the tomb, my mutilated arm, reanimated by a holy zeal, doth haste to lend its aid to resurrect the throne ; or else, by Heaven's favor, making confession of my faith, to pour out for my king the rest of my old blood !

LORD ORMOND.

Sublime devotion !

LORD ROCHESTER.

Venerable loyalty !

SIR RICHARD WILLIS.

Ah ! I am least deserving of you all. No other merit can I boast, than to have been of all the king's adherents the most fiercely persecuted !

DOCTOR JENKINS.

Ah ! how fruitful are your virtuous qualities in glorious examples !

SIR RICHARD WILLIS (with a deprecatory gesture).

Whom do we await ? I see our round-heads yonder.

LORD ORMOND.

Lambert is missing still. The coward hearts are slow.

LORD ROCHESTER (drinking, to Rosebery and Clifford).

What precious fellows are these saints of ours with their black felt hats, for all the world like well-trimmed yew-trees !

SIR RICHARD WILLIS (to Lord Ormond).

Who are all these sectaries ?

LORD ORMOND.

Yonder are Plinlimmon and Ludlow, Parliament men ; and he who follows us with glances of dismay and hate is Carr ; near by him is Damned Barebones, the inspired currier.

SIR RICHARD WILLIS.

Who is this Barebones ?

DAVENANT (in an undertone to Sir Richard).

He 's a man whose like cannot be found.
A deadly foe of tyranny, a currier of leather
for the saints, and titular upholsterer to Crom-
well, this Barebones feeds, as at two mangers,
at this twofold altar ; massacre and festival he
doth prepare at the same moment. While his
voice doth set a price upon the head of Crom-
well crowned, he bargains with him for his
coronation. Two ends he seeks to-day, the
worthy man, and does the devil's work, while
praising God. Obsequious tradesman, and
uncompromising saint, the shrewd fanatic
drives the hardest bargain that he can with
Noll, to whom his credit is most useful, for
the throne that he doth curse.

SIR RICHARD WILLIS.

Was not his brother Speaker of the House ?

DAVENANT.

Aye, in the late Parliament, whereof he
was himself a member.

SIR RICHARD WILLIS (to Lord Ormond).

And the others ?

LORD ORMOND.

Harrison, regicide ; Overton, regicide ; Gar-
land, regicide . . .

LORD CLIFFORD.

Canst say which of the three is Satan ?

LORD ORMOND.

Peace, my lord ! And he declaiming
yonder 's Joyce, the abductor of the king.

LORD ROSEBERY.

Accursed brood !

LORD ROCHESTER.

How gladly I would try conclusions with
yon roundhead dogs who outrage God !
How 't would delight my soul to make their
heads e'en rounder than they are by cutting
off their ears, a fitting guerdon of their pious
vigils ! What a diverting pastime 't would
have been to draw upon the villains,—were
they not our friends !

SCENE IX

THE SAME : LIEUTENANT-GENERAL LAMBERT; plain costume, like those worn by the other roundheads; carries a long sword with a heavy copper hilt.

(As Lambert enters the roundheads bow deferentially.)

LORD ORMOND.

Look, Lambert comes at last!

CARR (aside).

The mystery doth deepen!

LAMBERT.

Hail to the old friends of old England!

LORD ORMOND (to his adherents).

Soon the hour will strike to risk the fatal blow. Conclude we the alliance, and our final preparations make.

(He walks toward Lambert, who comes forward to meet him.)

Christ crucified . . .

LAMBERT.

To save mankind!—We are prepared.

LORD ORMOND.

I have three hundred gentlemen at my command, of whom these be the chiefs. When smite we the accursed?

LAMBERT.

When is he to be crowned?

LORD ORMOND.

To-morrow.

LAMBERT.

To-morrow let us strike the blow.

LORD ORMOND.

Agreed.

LAMBERT.

Agreed.

LORD ORMOND.

The hour?

LAMBERT.

High noon.

LORD ORMOND.

The place?

LAMBERT.

Westminster Hall itself.

LORD ORMOND.

Alliance!

LAMBERT.

Friendship!

(Their hands meet for an instant.)

(Aside.)

I shall have the crown! When thou hast served me to my heart's content, the scaffold Capel died upon is not so worm-eaten that 't will not bear a block for thee!

LORD ORMOND (aside).

Toward the throne he fancies that his steps do bear him, and his gibbet even now is making ready!

(A pause.)

LAMBERT (aside).

Go to! the deed is done, and I am compromised! Me they have made their leader! Why did I not say them nay? Ah! never mind! I will go on. My fear is most absurd; and who can say where he will end, who doth retrace his steps? I'll speak to them!

(He folds his arms across his breast, and looks up at the ceiling. The Puritans assume their favorite attitude of ecstasy and prayer. The cavaliers are seated at table; the younger men are drinking and laughing boisterously. Ormond, Willis, Davenant and Jenkins alone seem to listen to Lambert's harangue.)

Beloved! lo, the time has come, when, in the face of this misguided nation and its outraged laws, a man who calls himself the Lord Protector of this land, doth seek to arrogate unto himself the hereditary title of its former kings. Wherefore we come to you, to ask if 't is not meet to scourge this upstart pride, and if you say us yea, avenging with your swords our ancient liberties, abolished or usurped, to doom to death, without the hope of mercy or of pardon, this Oliver Cromwell of Huntingdonshire!

ALL (except Carr and Harrison).

Death to Oliver Cromwell!

THE ROUNDHEADS.

Let us exterminate the traitor!

THE CAVALIERS.

Let us strike down the infamous usurper!

OVERTON.

No king!

LAMBERT.

No master!

HARRISON.

Permit me humbly to set forth a scruple that doth vex me. Our oppressor seems to me a chosen instrument of Heaven; although a tyrant, he's a man of independent thought and will; perchance 't is he whose coming Daniel in his prophecy proclaimeth, when he saith: *The Saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever.*

LUDLOW.

'T is true the text is most explicit. But the same prophet, general, brings comfort to

your troubled soul. For Daniel elsewhere saith: *And the kingdom and dominion shall be given to the people of the Saints of the Most High. Ergo*, no man should take it ere it be given to him.

JOYCE.

We are the *people of the Saints!*

HARRISON.

I bow before your greater wisdom. But while I do avow myself defeated, Ludlow, I am not thoroughly convinced that the texts cited have the meaning you do put upon them and I would gladly at some future day advise with you touching these questions, interdict to profane minds. To our deliberation we will summon divers pious friends, who may, upon these matters, powerfully reinforce our lights with their inspired wisdom.

LUDLOW.

With all my heart. On Friday, if you be so minded.

(Harrison bows his assent.)

LAMBERT (aside, absorbed in his reflections).

What I said to them was very bold, in sooth!

JOYCE (to Lambert, pointing to a group of roundheads who have thus far kept by themselves in the background).

Yonder are three new conspirators. Their arms do itch to come a little tardily to labor in the vineyard; but these saintly laborers present themselves before you, knowing that 't is written: *The same wage to all.*

LAMBERT (with a sigh).

Bid them draw near.

(The three roundheads come forward toward where Lambert stands.)

What are your names, my brethren?

ONE OF THE NEW CONSPIRATORS.

*Whatever - Your - Enemies - May - Devise -
Against-You-Praise-God* PIMPLETON.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Death-to-Sinners PALMER.

THIRD CONSPIRATOR.

Live-to-Rise-Again JEROBOAM DEMER.

LORD ROCHESTER (in an undertone to Rosebery).

What do they say?

LORD ROSEBERY (in an undertone to Rochester).

They have the custom—most ridiculous it is!—of dressing up their names in some long verse out of the Bible.

LAMBERT (with a Bible open in his hand).

Do you swear?

PRAISE-GOD PIMPLETON.

We swear!

DEATH-TO-SINNERS PALMER.

Perish the thought of oaths!

LIVE-TO-RISE-AGAIN JEROBOAM DEMER.

Hell only listens to them, Heaven falsifies them.

PRAISE-GOD PIMPLETON.

May the faith deliver us from pagan blasphemies!

LAMBERT.

So be it! You do promise—with your hand upon the Holy Book—

(He hesitates.)

to seal the doom of Cromwell?

ALL THREE (with their hands upon the Bible).

Yes.

LAMBERT (in a more assured voice).

To lend us your support, to hold your peace, and act?

ALL THREE.

We promise . . .

LAMBERT.

Welcome to our ranks!

(The three conspirators take their places among the Puritans.)

OVERTON (aside to Lambert).

All is as we would have it; courage! all goes well.

LAMBERT (aside).

To-morrow I shall be, beyond a peradventure, plus a crown, or minus this poor head.

OVERTON (pointing to the conspirators).

My master, look!—how many friends you have!

LAMBERT (aside).

How many witnesses!

SYNDERCOMB (in the midst of the conspirators).

Cromwell must die!

CARR (to the roundheads).

My brethren, when your sword has smitten Cromwell wakened from his dream, that Baal overthrown, to whom men kneel in adoration, what will ye do then?

LUDLOW (thoughtfully).

In sooth, what shall we do?

LORD ORMOND (aside).

I know.

LAMBERT (embarrassed).

We will create a council, to consist of ten at most.

(Aside.)

And which will have a single head.

HARRISON (earnestly).

Ten members, General Lambert! Why, 't is far too few! There must be seventy as in the Jewish Sanhedrim! It is the sacred number.

CARR.

The only lawful government is the Long Parliament, disbanded by a crime.

JOYCE.

The council should consist of officers.

HARRISON (excitedly).

Heed what I say; there must be seventy in the new government.

BAREBONES.

Beloved, there can be for England no salvation, while we fashion not our lives upon the Bible, nor impose upon all tradesmen, their unhallowed callings thus to purify, the weights and measures of the sanctuary, and the sacred numbers. and, abandoning the things of Egypt and Chaldea for the things of Zion, exchange the foot for the hand's-breadth, the fathom for the cubit.

GARLAND.

Well and wisely said.

JOYCE.

Is Barebones mad? A mole, who naught can see beyond his hole! Perchance he takes his tan-yard for a throne, his bonnet for a crown, his yardstick for a sceptre!

PLINLIMMON (to Joyce).

Nay, mock not at him. The spirit often doth inspire his tongue.

(To Barebones.)

I do approve thy words.

BAREBONES (swelling with pride).

We needs must take, that nothing may be left half done, of every city all the chiefest men.

JOYCE (with a scornful laugh).

The curriers!

BAREBONES (bitterly, to Joyce).

Accept my thanks! a courteous word, in sooth. But tell me, Cornet Joyce, before you grew to be an officer and mocker, were you not yourself a tailor?

(Joyce makes an angry gesture.)

I, whom the City numbers 'mongst its notables . . .

(Joyce rushes at him, shaking his fist.)

OVERTON (stepping between them).

Go to! go to!

LORD ROSEBERY (to the Puritans).

(He rises, rolls his eyes sanctimoniously, assumes a devout expression, and sighs heavily.)

Good sirs, the Law of the Twelve Tables—the tables of the law . . .

(The Puritans break off their conversation to listen.)

CARR.

What would he say?

LORD ROSEBERY.

Do nowhere bid us die of hunger and of thirst. I cast my vote in favor of a slight refection, for our stomachs are quite empty!

(The roundheads turn away indignantly. The servants of the house place food upon the cavaliers' table.)

CARR (gazing at the cavaliers as they eat).

How these demons gorge themselves with meat and wine!

BAREBONES.

The pagans!

CARR.

List to me, before ye farther go: Are ye full sure that Cromwell doth intend to seize the kingly power?

OVERTON.

Too sure! to-morrow will a servile Parliament with that abolished title decorate his faithless head.

ALL (except Carr).

Death, death to the ambitious hypocrite !

HARRISON.

But I cannot conceive what motive doth prompt Cromwell to adventure this bold step. He must be mad indeed to look with longing eye upon the throne ! Of all the crown estates naught now remains. Woodstock has been destroyed, Windsor dismantled, and Hampton Court sold to the profit of the treasury.

LAMBERT (aside to Overton).

The thieving idiot ! who sees in kingly rank naught but the rubies in the diadem ; and in the throne, the goal of Oliver's ambition, so many yards of velvet to be sold to him who deals in cast-off finery ! Devoured by a thirst for gold that naught can quench, he looks upon the sceptre with a goldsmith's eye, and if a crown should happen in his way would not usurp it, no, but steal it.

BAREBONES (in a frenzy of excitement).

Ah ! why, in these days of misery, doth God of Jacob's lion make an unclean scape-goat ? Clad in his robe of honor, Oliver seemed always to be walking at the Lord's right hand ; he was like unto the ripe grain that waveth in our fields ; he wore of Judah the invulnerable armor ; when his mighty form did burst upon their dazzled eyes, then fled the Philistines, and cried : "'T is he !" O Israel, he was the pillow of thy couch ! But in thy mouth the honey changed to poison. He hath turned Tyrian, and Edom's children laughed aloud at thy desertion ! All the Amorites did leap for joy to see that he was led into their paths by Satan. Excited by the impure Abishag, he would be king as David was ;—may Agag's fate be his !

SYNDERCOMB.

Death to him !

LAMBERT.

The measure of his crimes is full to overflowing.

LORD DROGHEDA.

Drogheda still is reeking with his victims' blood.

LIVE-TO-RISE-AGAIN JEROBOAM DEMER.

His court is open to the children of Tyre and Gomorrha.

LORD ORMOND.

His hands are dripping with the blood of the king martyr.

HARRISON.

Heedless of our rights, established by so many hard-fought wars, he doth make restitution to the cavaliers of all their vast estates.

DEATH-TO-SINNERS PALMER.

And yesterday, at the lewd banquet proffered him by the Lord Mayor, in the city's name, they complimented him forsooth ! He did receive the sword, then gave it back again.

LAMBERT.

Sure those were kingly airs !

JOYCE.

England is lost !

DOCTOR JENKINS.

He tries, absolves, condemns, lays taxes, all without appeal.

SIR RICHARD WILLIS.

At his behest Capel was murdered. Hamilton and Holland—they were this tiger's prey.

BAREBONES.

With shameless insolence he flaunts his silken doublets.

VERTON.

He hath refused us all that which was due to us. Bradshaw is exiled.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Bradshaw was not hanged !

PRAISE-GOD PIMPLETON.

He tolerates the rites of popery and prelacy in scorn of Holy Writ.

DAVENANT.

He has profaned the tombs at Westminster !

LUDLOW.

And Ireton he caused to be interred by torchlight !

THE CAVALIERS.

Sacrilege !

THE ROUNDHEADS.

Idolatry !

JOYCE.

My friends ! no mercy !

SYNDERCOMB (drawing his dagger).

Death to him !

ALL (brandishing their daggers.)

Let us exterminate the tyrant and his brood !

(At that moment there is a loud knocking at the door. The conspirators pause. Silence of alarm and surprise. The knocking is renewed.)

LORD ORMOND (approaching the door).

Who goes there ?

LAMBERT (aside).

The devil !

A VOICE (without).

'T is a friend !

LORD ORMOND.

What is thy will ?

THE VOICE.

By Heaven ! 't is a friend, I tell you ! open !

LORD ORMOND.

Thy name !

THE VOICE.

Is Richard Cromwell.

ALL THE CONSPIRATORS.

Richard Cromwell !

LORD ORMOND.

The protector's son !

LAMBERT.

The plot 's discovered.

LORD ROSEBERY.

We must e'en admit him.

(He opens the door. Enters Richard Cromwell.)

SCENE X

THE SAME : RICHARD CROMWELL, in the costume of a cavalier.

(As Richard enters, all the Puritans wrap themselves in their cloaks, and pull their hats over their faces.)

RICHARD CROMWELL.

By my soul! was ever den of thieves so barricaded? No, nor ever stronghold so well guarded! Clifford, Rosebery, save for your friendly voices, which did rise above the din of bottles and of tables, your poor Richard would have turned away disheartened.

(He salutes the conspirators around him.)

Give you good-morrow, gentlemen! Whose health d' ye drink? Whoe'er it may be, by your leave I 'll join you in the toast.

LORD CLIFFORD (greatly embarrassed).

Dear Richard—we were saying . . .

LORD ROCHESTER (laughing).

May Heaven bless you!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

What! I was the subject of your conversation? You are too kind!

BAREBONES (aside).

May hell in thy vile throat put out its burning coals!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

I trust my presence here does not embarrass you?

LORD ROSEBERY (confusedly).

Your presence? nay, far otherwise! Too happy! Do you seek us here upon some business of importance?

RICHARD CROMWELL.

I come on the same business that doth bring you here.

CARR (aside).

Can he be in the plot?

SIR RICHARD WILLIS (aside).

What! Richard Cromwell too!

RICHARD CROMWELL (raising his voice).

Sir Peter Downie, Sedley and Lord Rosebery, of felony I do accuse you all!

LORD ROSEBERY (terrified).

What does he say?

LORD CLIFFORD.

Dear Richard . . .

(Aside.)

God damn me! he knows all.

SEDLEY (in deadly terror).

I swear . . .

RICHARD CROMWELL.

First hear me to the end, and having heard me, justify yourselves, if it be possible.

LORD ROSEBERY (in an undertone to the others).

We are discovered!

DOWNIE.

Yes, 't is but too plain!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

For well-nigh ten full years have we been friends; balls, hunting-parties, pleasures of

all sorts, permissible and non-permissible, we have until this day enjoyed together; our sorrows and our joys, our purses, aye, our mistresses, were common to us all. Your dogs were mine, my falcons yours; we passed whole nights beneath the self-same balconies. Although my name doth bind me to an adverse party, I have always lived among you like a brother. Yet, despite our fellowship, you have a secret from your Richard! Such a secret too!

LORD ROSEBERY.

All 's lost! What can we say?

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Question your hearts, and tell me if, in very truth, I should have looked for this? 'T is infamous!

SEDLEY.

Believe, dear Richard . . .

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Aye, devise excuses! Have I not served you in a hundred ways? To whom, pray, had you recourse, in your dire dismay, for help against the usurers, more dreaded than the roundheads? Clifford, in whose name did I but yesterday repay four hundred golden nobles to the Jew Manasseh?

CLIFFORD (in confusion).

I cannot deny it. The accursed Jew . . .

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Sir Peter Downie, when thou wert arrested, who became thy surety, although thy exiled family was by an act of Parliament attained?

DOWNIE (with embarrassment).

Thou.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Whose influence, Lord Rosebery, did hold the husband of thy light o' love in prison as the author of a libel, through a certain night?

LORD ROCHESTER (aside to Davenant).

You 'd say he was a most good-humored blade.

BAREBONES (aside to Carr).

The shameless Herod, to make use of arbitrary power in aid of lust!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside to Davenant).

His way of improvising widows moves my admiration!

LORD ROSEBERY (to Richard Cromwell).

True it is that of your friendship I had most convincing proofs. But now . . .

RICHARD CROMWELL (folding his arms across his breast).

And yet, this friendship, on my part most injudicious and unseasonable, you do all requite—by treason!

LAMBERT (aside).

Treason!

LORD CLIFFORD.

Treason!

SEDLEY.

God!

CARR (with an air of amazement).

What mean they?

RICHARD CROMWELL (sharply).

Even so; you come without me to this place to drink!

LORD ROSEBERY.

I breathe again!

(In an undertone to the other cavaliers.)

The veritable purpose of our rendezvous eludes his gaze. He sees the bottles only, not the daggers.

(To Richard Cromwell.)

On my word, dear Richard . . .

RICHARD CROMWELL.

'T is high treason! As I live, to be by you so slighted doth afflict me sore. Go to! you

come here to carouse, without a word to me! What have I done? Am I not, like the rest of you, a good-for-naught? Drink without me! 't is not well done of you. Moreover I know how to hold my peace. 'T is most becoming in you, to my mind, to mystify these crafty Puritans, and in these broad-brimmed hats and vulgar cloaks disguise yourselves. But to conceal yourselves from me, who, in this sanctuary, laughed first and loudest at the sumptuary laws, and at the solemn Solons passing bills to limit to three shillings each man 's reckoning! Is that good fellowship I pray to know? Did ever I recoil before your wildest revels? Have I been less constant at horse-races and at cock-fights, since the new ordinances? Last of all, have I not followed you so far in your mad recklessness as to have played with you in comedy?

BAREBONES (aside, indignantly).

The Sadducee!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

For merry-makings, duels, what you will, I 'm always ready;—what reproach have you to make to me?

LORD CLIFFORD.

Your many meritorious and striking qualities are very dear to us.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

But no. It may be that I do assume too much. Our eyes are often blind to our own faults, and we do see ourselves upon the better side alone. Have I displeased you?

SEDLEY.

Nay.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

An if I have, I love that you should tell me.

LORD ROSEBERY.

Richard!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

You will doubtless do me justice to believe that I do hate these cursed Puritans as you do?

BAREBONES.

As we do!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

That 's what I say. Oh! how can one endure these stupid sectaries who desecrate the holy Scriptures with their slaughter-breathing treatises, and ever on some murd'rous work intent, and ever praising God, preach sermons without end, and cheat at play!

CARR (between his teeth):

Sayest thou the saints do play? Child of Herodias, thou liest!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

I was near delivering a jeremiad in their manner. But enough of this. Look you, my friends, to prove to you how little fear I have of being compromised with you, and to what point my thoughts and wishes coincide with yours; to prove how dearly I do love the cause whereon your fondest hopes do rest,

(He fills a glass and puts it to his lips.)

I drink the health of good King Charles!

ALL THE CONSPIRATORS (in amazement).

The king!

RICHARD CROMWELL (with an air of surprise).

We are alone. Then why this terror-stricken air?

CARR (aside).

I did indeed divine that Israel was taken in a snare. It seems that in this den the Stuarts fill men's minds. But we shall see!

SIR RICHARD WILLIS (aside).

He is the son of Cromwell, none the less!
But if he be a party to the plot, he's most
imprudent.

(At this moment, the blast of a trumpet is heard without, followed by a pause of surprise and anxiety.)

A LOUD VOICE (without).

In the name of Parliament, open the tavern
door!

(The conspirators gaze at one another in dismay.)

LORD ROCHESTER.

We're fairly caught, like Cacus, in our
cave!

LAMBERT (aside to Joyce).

Cromwell sends hither to arrest us.

JOYCE (in an undertone).

He knows all! We can no longer doubt it.

OVERTON (in an undertone).

If't is so, we needs must cut ourselves a
passage with our swords!

LAMBERT (in the same tone).

What could we do? the square is doubtless
occupied by guards.

(A second blast upon the trumpet.)

RICHARD CROMWELL (glass in hand).

A murrain on them! to break in on us at
such a moment!

THE VOICE (outside).

In the name of Parliament, open the tavern
door!

BAREBONES.

We must obey.

(He goes to the door.)

LAMBERT (aside).

My head doth tremble on my shoulders,
ready for its fall.

(Barebones opens the tavern door; some of the other conspirators remove the shutters, and the canvas at the rear of the stage is seen to be pierced with broad, barred windows, through which can be seen the wine-market, thronged with people. In the centre of the stage is the public crier, mounted, and attended by four footmen in livery, armed with pikes, and by an escort of archers and halberdiers. The crier holds a trumpet in one hand and an unfolded parchment in the other.)

SCENE XI

THE SAME : THE PUBLIC CRIER, Footmen, Halberdiers, Archers, Populace.

(The conspirators draw aside to the right and left of the stage.)

THE CRIER (having blown a blast upon the trumpet).

Silence !—Give ear, all good people !—
Hum !—“ By order of his Highness . . . ”

HARRISON (aside to Garland).

Soon his Majesty !

THE CRIER.

“ Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England, to every citizen, to every subject, soldier or civilian, we do make known . . . ”

OVERTON (aside to Ludlow).

Ah ! the word *subject* has come back again !

THE CRIER.

“ That, to the end that the Lord’s will may be made clear, touching the motion which an honorable member, Alderman Pack, has made in Parliament, to wit, that the said Lord Protector be declared King of England, . . . ”

LUDLOW (aside to Overton).

’T is well ! the usurper hath removed his mask !

THE CRIER.

“ And more than all, to save this wise and learned people from the ills the last eclipse did presage ; and to the end that God may be merciful to each and all, the Commons’ House, thereto advised by learned doctors honored by the people, hath voted that this

day be given o’er to fasting and to prayer ; enjoining upon all good citizens to think upon their crimes and sins.” ’T is said !

ONE OF THE FOOTMEN.

Amen !

THE CRIER.

God bless the English nation !

THE CHIEF OF THE ARCHERS.

Conformably to the said act of Parliament, we hereby call upon all ale-house keepers, tavern-keepers, victualers, under pain of twenty shillings fine, to close instanter shop and tavern, godless dens, where all the laws of fasting are contemned.

LAMBERT (aside).

Good lack ! once more my skirts are cleared, save for the fright !

(Aside to the Puritan conspirators.)

Until to-morrow. ’T is full time, I think, for us to part.

GARLAND (in an undertone).

Where shall we meet again ?

BAREBONES (in an undertone).

In the great hall at Westminster. To-morrow, just before th’ appointed hour, I, Noll’s upholsterer, will be your introducer, where his unclean throne has been by me made ready for his occupancy.

(The conspirators surround Barebones and press his hand in token of assent.)

OVERTON.

'T is well. Now go we hence, most quietly,
but without mystery.

THE CRIER AND FOOTMEN.

God bless the English people !

THE PURITAN CONSPIRATORS (in undertones).

Death to Cromwell !

(Exeunt.)

RICHARD CROMWELL (to the cavaliers, who are
preparing to take their leave).

'T is most annoying to be thus harried in
our merry-making ! 'T is plain that my good
lord, my father, is no longer young. I care
not for a throne that must be bought by
fasting !

(Exit with the cavaliers.)



ACT SECOND

THE SPIES

THE BANQUETING HALL, AT WHITEHALL

At the back of the stage is seen the window through which Charles I. passed to go to the scaffold. At the right a large Gothic arm-chair beside a table covered with a velvet cloth, whereon the letters C. R. (Carolus Rex) can still be distinguished. The same cipher, in gold letters upon a blue background, still covers the walls, although half-effaced. As the curtain rises, the stage is occupied by groups of courtiers in court costumes, who seem to be conversing in low tones. The ambassadors of Spain and France with their retinues, are near the front of the stage. The Spanish ambassador at the left, surrounded by pages, equerries, court alcaldes, and alguazils; in their midst a herald of the Council of Castile, carrying a black velvet cushion, whereon is the collar of the Golden Fleece. The French ambassador at the right, surrounded by his pages and gentlemen; by his side, Mancini; behind him, two gentlemen carrying blue velvet cushions, upon one of which is a superb sword with a hilt of chased gold, and upon the other a letter from which hangs a huge seal of red wax; four pages in Cardinal Mazarini's livery bear a large roll, wrapped in stiffened silk. The Spanish ambassador wears the costume of a knight of the Golden Fleece; all the members of his suite are dressed in black, satin or velvet. The French ambassador wears the costume of a knight of the order of Saint-Esprit; his retinue presents a brilliant, diversified mingling of court costumes, uniforms and liveries. Behind these two principal groups is a group of Swedish envoys, another of Piedmontese, and a third of Dutch, all noticeable by reason of the diversity of their costumes. At the back of the stage is a group of English noblemen, among whom can be distinguished by his coat of gold brocade, and his two pages, Hannibal Sesthead, a young Danish nobleman. Two Puritan sentries, armed with muskets and halberds, pace to and fro before a great Gothic door at the back of the stage.

SCENE I

The DUC DE CRÉQUI, Ambassador of France, MANCINI, nephew of Cardinal Mazarini, and their suite; DON LUIS DE CARDENAS, Ambassador of Spain, and his suite; FILIPPI, Envoy of Christina of Sweden, and his suite; THREE PIEDMONTESE DEPUTIES; SIX ENVOYS OF THE DUTCH REPUBLIC, HANNIBAL SESTHEAD, cousin to the King of Denmark, and two pages; English Lords and Gentlemen; Two Sentinels.

DON LUIS DE CARDENAS (to one of his pages).

Page, what o'clock?

THE PAGE (consulting a great watch which hangs at his belt).

High noon.

DON LUIS DE CARDENAS.

By good St. James, two hours have I waited here. I do agree that, great as Cromwell is, it doth augment his glory that a grandee of Castile should shiver at his door; but he doth tarry overlong.

THE PAGE.

Most noble master, while your Excellency doth demean yourself, attending on Don Cromwell's pleasure, he doth hold council, so 't is said . . .

DON LUIS DE CARDENAS (sternly, with a side-long glance at Créqui).

Who bade you speak?

MANCINI (aside to the Duc de Créqui).

'T is most diverting, in good sooth, to see a haughty Spaniard in this palace, angry at heart, in fear and trembling sue for the gracious glances of an Englishman! Upon

his features pride and shame do struggle for the mastery.

DON LUIS DE CARDENAS (aside).

How will the Lord Protector take my message?

DUC DE CRÉQUI (to Mancini).

What place is this, Mancini?

MANCINI.

Monseigneur, 't is the former banquet-hall, now set apart for solemn ceremonials. Upon these walls the cipher of the murdered Charles doth still remain, forgotten; yonder 's the window of sad memory, by which th' ill-fated king went forth to meet his doom. 'T was but a step or two for him to take from this, the palace wherein he was born. And 't is a regicide, a sectary, an impious knave . . .

(The great door is thrown wide open.)

AN USHER (in a sonorous voice).

His Highness the Lord Protector of England!

(All remove their hats, and bow respectfully. Enters Cromwell, with his hat on.)

SCENE II

THE SAME: CROMWELL, dressed in a very simple military coat, leather doublet, and broad baldric, with his coat of arms embroidered upon it, to which a long sword is attached; WHITELOCKE, Lord Commissioner of the Great Seal, in a long robe of black satin, trimmed with white fur, and a huge wig; EARL OF CARLISLE, captain of the protector's guard, in the uniform of his rank; STOUPE, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

(Throughout the scene, the Earl of Carlisle stands behind the protector's chair, with drawn sword; Whitelocke stands at his right, and Stoupe at his left with an open book in his hand. As Cromwell enters, all those present form two lines, and remain with their heads bent until the protector has reached his seat.)

CROMWELL (standing in front of his arm-chair).

Peace and good fortune to all loyal hearts!

As each of you comes hither as ambassador to us, we now do give you audience in England's name.

(He takes his seat, removes his hat, and puts it on again.)

Speak, Duke of Créqui.

(The Duc de Créqui, followed by Mancini and their retinue approach with as humble reverences as for a king. All the others withdraw to the back of the stage, out of hearing.)

DUC DE CRÉQUI.

Monseigneur, the alliance which assures you the co-operation of the most Christian king is ratified anew to-day. Monsieur de Mancini will read to you the letter his most eminent uncle sends to you by him.

(Mancini approaches the protector, bends his knee, and presents the cardinal's letter to him upon the cushion, Cromwell breaks the seal, and hands the letter back to him.)

CROMWELL (to Mancini).

'T is from his Eminence Cardinal Mazarini! Read on.

MANCINI. (He unfolds the letter and reads.)

"To his Highness Monseigneur the Lord Protector of England, these:

"MONSEIGNEUR:

"The glorious part played by your Highness's troops in the present war between France and Spain, the serviceable assistance by them afforded to the king, my master, in the campaign in Flanders, increase tenfold his Majesty's gratitude to so powerful an ally as yourself, and one who has so materially contributed to humble the overweening pride of the House of Austria. Wherefore it seemed good to the king to send as ambassador extraordinary to your court Monsieur le Duc de Créqui, who is commissioned to inform your Highness that the strong town of Mardyke, but lately taken by our troops, has been placed in the hands of the generals of the English Commonwealth, until such time as Dunkirk, which doth still maintain a posture of defence, can be delivered to them conformably to treaty stipulations. Monsieur le Duc de Créqui hath it in further charge to beg your Highness's acceptance of a golden sword, which the King of France doth make bold to send to your Highness in token of his esteem and friendship. Monsieur de Mancini, my nephew, will make known to you the

contents of this letter, and will lay at your Highness's feet a trifling gift which I venture to adjoin in my own name to his Majesty's; 't is a piece of tapestry from the new royal manufactory, called the Gobelins. I dare to hope that this mark of my regard will not be unacceptable to your Highness. Were I not ill at Calais, I would myself have taken occasion to journey to England, in order to present my respectful homage to one of the greatest of men past and present; him, whom next to my own king it would most gratify my ambition to serve. Compelled to deny myself that honor, I send in my stead the person most nearly connected with me by ties of blood, to express to your Highness my unbounded veneration for your person, and my unalterable determination to unite the king, my master, and yourself in never-ending friendship.

"I make so bold as to subscribe myself with the utmost sincerity,

"Your Highness's most obedient and humble servant,

GUILIO MAZARINI.

"Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church."

(Mancini, with a low reverence, once more hands the letter to Cromwell, who passes it to Stoupe. At a sign from the Duc de Créquy, the pages in the royal livery place upon Cromwell's table the cushion, upon which lies the golden sword; at Mancini's command, the pages in Mazarini's livery unroll beneath the protector's feet a rich carpet of Gobelins tapestry.)

CROMWELL (to Créquy and Mancini).

For these rich presents, destined for our humble self, be pleased, my lords, to thank his Eminence. England will ever be to France a sister.

(Aside to Whitlocke.)

This base priest, who flatters me on bended knee, aloud doth say to me: *Great man!* while 'neath his breath he dubs me: *Lucky fool!*

(He turns abruptly to the Piedmontese envoys.)

And you, sirs, what seek you?

(They come forward respectfully.)

ONE OF THE ENVOYS.

With saddened hearts, we come to crave your Highness's assistance.

CROMWELL.

Who are you?

THE ENVOY.

We are sent hither to your Highness by the Vaudois.

CROMWELL (good-humoredly).

Ah!

THE ENVOY.

Tyrannic laws impose upon us fetters grievous to be borne. Our prince is of the Romish faith, and we are Calvinists; our cities are laid waste by fire and sword in order to coerce us to pray God according to his will. Our mourning country sends us to your feet.

CROMWELL (indignantly).

Who dares oppress you? who?

THE ENVOY.

The Duke of Savoy.

CROMWELL (to the Duc de Créquy).

Sir Ambassador of France? dost hear? Go bid the cardinal, e'en for the love he bears us, interpose and make to cease the wrongs of which this people is the victim. France doth in the hollow of her hand hold this most noble duke; force him to yield! 'T is running counter to the law of God to persecute for difference of faith. Moreover, Calvin I do much esteem.

(The duke bows.)

MANCINI (aside to the duke).

To write the legend: PUBLIC TOLERATION, more distinctly he hath dipped his hands in Catholic blood.

CROMWELL (to the Swedish envoy).

Your name?

(Turning again to the Vaudois, as they retire toward the back of the stage.)

Vaudois, rely on me at all times!

THE SWEDISH ENVOY (bowing).

Filippi. My province, Terracina. 'T is my mission to deposit at a hero's feet this gift offered for his acceptance by her august majesty, my queen, Christina.

(He places before Cromwell a small casket of polished steel, and hands him a letter, which the protector passes to Stoupe.)

(In an undertone to Cromwell.)

In her letter you may read, by whose command and in whose interest Monaldeschi was slain at Fontainebleau.

CROMWELL.

So she has wreaked her vengeance on her former lover?

THE ENVOY (still in an undertone).

Mazarini did graciously permit my outraged queen to dog his footsteps even to the heart of France and there at last exterminate him.

CROMWELL (aside to Whitelocke).

Hospitality for murder!

THE ENVOY (continuing).

My queen, self-exiled from her throne, doth seek asylum 'neath the great protector's sway.

CROMWELL (surprised and annoyed).

With me? I cannot answer without time for thought. We have no palace for a queen.

DON LUIS CARDENAS (aside).

No, but they soon will have one for a king.

CROMWELL (to Filippi, after a moment's pause).

Let her remain in France. The London air is insalubrious to kings dethroned.

(Aside to Whitelocke.)

His wanton queen! a woman of no morals, who would show herself unclothed to public view!

(As he turns his head he discovers the envoy still standing near him, in the attitude of one who is waiting. He addresses him with a surprised air.)

How now?

FILIPPI (bowing and offering him the casket).

My mission still is partly unfulfilled. Will not your Highness deign to look into this casket?

CROMWELL.

What doth it contain?

FILIPPI (still bowing).

Pray open it, my lord.

CROMWELL.

What mystery is here? You do astonish me.

FILIPPI (offering him a golden key).

The key, my lord.

CROMWELL.

Give me the key.

(He takes the key, and is about to open the casket as Filippi places it upon a table; Whitelocke stops him.)

WHITELOCKE (aside to Cromwell).

Beware, my lord! more times than one a trait'rous villain, sent by his master to dispatch some man of eminence, has carried to him, in an iron casket like to this, a deadly poison or a thunderbolt from hell; and when the box is opened the infernal apparatus does its work. Your enemies are on the watch. This man has mischief in his eye; distrust him. This casket, which you were about to open, mayhap contains some deviltry to cause your death.

CROMWELL (aside to Whitelocke).

Dost think so? It may be. So, Whitelocke, open it yourself.

WHITELOCKE (his voice trembling with terror).

My unsurpassed devotion to your person—

(Aside.)

God!

CROMWELL (with a smile).

I know it well and count upon it.

(Aside.)

Let us see how far 't will go.

(He hands him the key.)

WHITELOCKE (aside).

What store of courage one must have to be a courtier! Dire perplexity! 't is death or else disgrace. Ah! that 's another form of death!

(He approaches the casket, and inserts the key in the lock with trembling hand.)

I 'll die at least with a bold face.

(He opens the casket with the caution of a man who anticipates a sudden explosion, peers timidly within, and cries:)

A crown!

(The Swedish envoy smiles benignly.)

CROMWELL (in amazement).

How now!

WHITELOCKE. (He takes from the casket a royal crown, and places it upon the table.)

(Aside.)

'T is none the less a snare!

CROMWELL (frowning).

What means this fooling?

FILIPPI (bowing with a satisfied air).

Sire!

CROMWELL (pointing to the crown).

Is it pure gold?

FILIPPI.

Ah! sire, can you doubt it?

CROMWELL (to Whitelocke, aloud).

Good! Let it be melted down! I give this bauble to the London hospitals.

(To the stupefied Filippi.)

Meseems I can employ this woman's frippery, this royal pinchbeck to no better end. I should not know what use to make of it.

DON LUIS CARDENAS (aside).

Is he in very truth determined to remain protector?

MANCINI (aside to the Duc de Créquy).

He might send in exchange a king's head to Christina.

DUC DE CRÉQUI (aside to Mancini).

Aye, that present would more fittingly cement the bond between the vassal regicide and the red-handed queen.

CROMWELL (dismissing Filippi, with a gesture expressive of displeasure).

Farewell, Sir Swede, native of Terracina!

(Aside to Whitelocke.)

Filippi and Mancini! always you will find Italians closely wedded to intrigue. These bastard scions of the ancient Roman stock, who know no law and own no character, degenerate heirs of those once masters of the earth, who raised so high the sword of battle, still do rule the world, but rule it from below! The Rome, whose precepts Europe doth obey to-day, doth cast a lynx's glance, where once the eagle's eye did soar. The iron chain imposed on twenty far-off tribes is superseded by a hidden thread which guides the antics of base dancing-jacks. O dwarfs from giants sprung! O foxes born of wolves! Turn where we may, we find you with your honeyed words, Mancini, Filippi, Torti and Mazarini! Satan should take a name in *i* for his intriguing!

(After a pause, to the Flemish envoys.)

Flemings, what seek you? the truce is at an end.

THE CHIEF OF THE DUTCH ENVOYS.

The States of the United Provinces, free like yourself, and like you Protestants, do proffer their request for peace.

CROMWELL (harshly).

Sirs, 't is too late. What 's more, the Parliament of this republic deemeth you too worldly in your policy, and doth not choose to join in brotherly accord with allies so given o'er to vanity and carnal-mindedness!

(He waves his hand and the Flemings retire. Thereupon he seems to espy for the first time Don Luis de Cardenas, who has thus far made fruitless efforts to attract his attention.)

Aha! Señor Ambassador of Spain, good-morrow! We saw you not!

DON LUIS DE CARDENAS (hiding his wrath with a low bow).

May God be with your Highness! We come to crave the honor of a secret audience, touching affairs of high import. The war in Flanders hath dissension sown betwixt us, but the Catholic king dares hope to reach an understanding with you; and, to demonstrate the high esteem in which he holds you, doth my master offer for your Highness's acceptance the Golden Fleece.

(The pages who bear the collar draw near.)

CROMWELL (rising, with indignation).

For whom, I pray you, do you take me? What! Dost think that I, the chosen austere leader of the old republicans of this old England, become a vile upholder of base vanities, would stain this contrite heart with such a heathen symbol? Dost think to see a Grecian idol pendant to the rosary of Rome upon the breast of Sodom's conqueror? Away with all such pomps and vanities! Cromwell declines alliance with Balthazar!

DON LUIS DE CARDENAS (aside).

The heretic!

(Aloud.)

Before all others did the Catholic king you recognize as chief of the republic!

CROMWELL (interrupting him).

Does he think, forsooth, by treating Cromwell as his freedman to transform a tower of Zion to a whited sepulchre? The Golden Fleece to me! I leave to the idolaters their theatre temples and their actor priests? They seek in hell their treasure and their gods; they have the golden fleece, e'en as they have the golden calf!

(He pauses for a moment, and eyes the whole Spanish embassy haughtily, then continues with animation.)

But I! Am I to be insulted with impunity? Pray, did the Portuguese ambassador protect his brother from the vials of my wrath? Don Luis! had your master the effrontery to insult me to my face, and by ambassador? 'T would be somewhat too formal an affront! But go!

DON LUIS DE CARDENAS (in a rage).

So fare you well! 'T is war, aye, never-ending war!

(Exit with his retinue.)

MANCINI (aside to Duc de Créqui).

The proud Castilian chose but ill the place to strike.

DUC DE CRÉQUI (aside, gazing at the Golden Fleece, as the pages bear it off the stage).

That same affront, however, I did for myself solicit.

CROMWELL (aside to Stoupe).

'T was of prime importance, in this conference, to break with Spain, while France was looking on. But follow Cardenas, and try to soothe his wounded self-esteem; and learn, if that may be, the object of his mission.

(Exit Stoupe.)

(The door at the back of the stage is thrown open.)

AN USHER.

Her Highness the Protectress !

CROMWELL (aside).

God ! it is my wife !

(He waves his hand to dismiss the ambassadors.)

Farewell, my lord duke, and you, gentlemen . . .

(Exeunt all through a side door with repeated deep reverences. The Earl of Carlisle and White-locke ceremoniously bow out the French ambassador. As they are going off the stage, enter Elizabeth Bourchier, Cromwell's wife: Mistress Fletwood, Lady Falconbridge, Lady Claypole, Lady Frances, his daughters. They courtesy to their father.)

SCENE III

CROMWELL; ELIZABETH BOURCHIER, MISTRESS FLETWOOD, both in black, the latter especially noticeable for her affectation of Puritan simplicity; LADY FALCONBRIDGE, richly and fashionably dressed; LADY CLAYPOLE, wrapped up as if she were ill, with a lackadaisical expression; LADY FRANCES, a young girl, in white, with a veil.

CROMWELL (to the protectress).

Good-morrow, mistress. Have you not slept well? You seem but poorly.

ELIZABETH BOURCHIER.

Nay. I scarcely closed my eyes till day-break. In good sooth I love not all this pomp. My chamber, once the queen's, is far too vast. The armored bed whereon the Stuarts and the Tudors slept, the cloth of silver canopy, the gilded columns and the waving plumes, the balustrade that keeps me captive on my royal platform; velvet furnishings and silver urns,—'t is all a dream that from my eyes doth banish sleep. One needs must make a study of this palace, too. I am not wonted to its thousand twists and turnings: yes, I lose my way in this vast White-hall, and I'm sadly ill at ease in a queen's chair of state!

CROMWELL.

And so you cannot bear your elevated rank! Day after day your lamentations . . .

ELIZABETH BOURCHIER.

Vex you sore, I know; but I would much prefer our humble cock-pit to this royal palace.

(To Mistress Fletwood.)

Most of all we sigh for the old manor house in Huntingdon, do we not, my child?

(To Cromwell.)

O happy days! How pleasant 't was to rise at dawn, and visit garden, poultry-yard and mead; to go and watch the brewers at their work; to let the children play about the fields!

CROMWELL.

My lady!

ELIZABETH BOURCHIER.

Happy days when Cromwell still was nothing, when my life was calm and peaceful, when I slept so soundly.

CROMWELL.

Lay aside these vulgar tastes.

ELIZABETH BOURCHIER.

And why? for I was born to them. Was I condemned to all this grandeur in my younger days? I cannot make myself accustomed to the manners of a court; your long-trained dresses much impede my steps. At the lord-mayor's banquet yesterday I suffered with the spleen. 'T is pleasant, on my word, to dine with all of London! You yourself seemed sadly bored. We supped so joyously in the old days beside our own hearth-stone.

CROMWELL.

My present rank . . .

ELIZABETH BOURCHIER.

Oh! think on your poor mother! Your ephemeral, uncertain grandeur cast a blight on her old age; corroding care far more than weight of years drove her to the grave. Her eye, as you were rising to your present eminence, did take account of all the perils that encompass you, and could the better judge the distance you must fall. Whenever, as you overthrew your rivals one by one, the city did commemorate your latest triumph, if perchance the clamor of the over-zealous populace fell on her dulled and torpid ear,—the cannons and the bells, the noisy acclamations, and the tread of hurrying throngs,—roused from her torpor, she would raise her head, seeking in her fears the cause of the rejoicing, and, trembling, she would cry: "Great God! my son is dead!"

CROMWELL.

To-day her dust reposes in the sepulchre of England's kings.

ELIZABETH BOURCHIER.

What bliss! Pray does she sleep more soundly there? or does she know if there your dust will e'er be laid by hers? God grant it may not be for long to come!

LADY CLAYPOLE (in a languishing voice).

'T will be my lot, my father, first of all to go to that abode of death.

CROMWELL.

How now! Again these gloomy thoughts! Still out of sorts!

LADY CLAYPOLE.

Ah yes! my strength is fading fast away; I need the sunshine and the country air. This sombre palace with its endless corridors and monstrous halls, where cold and darkness reign, is like the tomb to me. I soon shall be no more!

CROMWELL (kissing her on the forehead).

Go to, my child, go to! Some day we'll go and look once more upon our lovely vales. Still a brief space I needs must tarry here.

MISTRESS FLETWOOD (sourly).

To build yourself a throne? be frank, my father; you would fain be king, is it not so? But Fletwood, my good husband, will prevent you!

CROMWELL.

What! my son-in-law!

MISTRESS FLETWOOD.

He will not follow any tortuous path. In a republic there can be no king. I take my stand with him against you on this point.

CROMWELL.

My daughter, too!

LADY FALCONBRIDGE (to Mistress Fletwood).

Indeed, I do not understand you, sister mine! my father's a free man; his throne is ours. Why should not he be king, as well as any other? and why ourselves deny the bliss unspeakable of being royal highness and princess of the blood.

MISTRESS FLETWOOD.

I set but little store, sister, by such vanities. My soul's intent upon the work of its salvation.

LADY FALCONBRIDGE.

I love much the court, nor do I see why 't is that, when my husband is a nobleman, my father is not king.

MISTRESS FLETWOOD.

Eve's pride, my sister, caused the fall of the first man!

LADY FALCONBRIDGE (turning away disdainfully).

'T is plain that she's not mated to a gentleman!

CROMWELL (testily).

Be silent, both! Mark well and imitate the calm and modest bearing of your youngest sister.

(To Frances, whose eyes are fixed upon the window through which Charles I. passed.)

What is the subject of your thoughts, my Frances?

LADY FRANCES.

Alas! the aspect of this venerable spot, my father, rends my heart. Your sister, 'neath whose roof my life has hitherto been passed, did teach me always to revere the exiled family; and, lately brought to dwell within these sombre walls, I seem unceasingly to see ghosts wandering everywhere.

CROMWELL.

What ghosts?

LADY FRANCES.

Our Stuarts.

CROMWELL.

Ah! that name 's forever ringing in my ears!

LADY FRANCES.

'T was here the martyr died!

CROMWELL.

My child!

LADY FRANCES (pointing to the window at the back of the stage).

Is not yon window, father, that through which Charles I., whom Englishmen dared to disown, went forth for the last time from Whitehall?

CROMWELL (aside).

Frances, unthinking child, how thou dost hurt me!

(Enters Thurlow.)

Ah! 't is Thurlow!

SCENE IV

THE SAME: THURLOW, carrying a portfolio with the protector's arms; Puritan costume.

THURLOW (bowing).

I come, my lord, on business of importance.

CROMWELL (to his wife).

Pardon me, my lady—your Highness—I would be alone.

ELIZABETH BOURCHIER.

To whom, I prithee, speak you in that fashion?

CROMWELL.

To your Highness.

ELIZABETH BOURCHIER.

To me, Cromwell! pardon me, I pray!
In all my grandeur I forget myself, I lose my way! my mind doth never reconcile my borrowed titles with my real name; my lady the Protectress, with plain Mistress Cromwell.

(Exit with her daughter.)

(Cromwell motions to the two sentries to withdraw.)



E. Borel

G. Borel

G. Borel

SCENE V

CROMWELL, THURLOW.

(While Thurlow is arranging his papers upon the table, Cromwell is apparently absorbed in melancholy thoughts. At last he makes an effort and breaks the silence.)

CROMWELL.

I am not happy, Thurlow!

THURLOW.

But these ladies do adore your Highness.

CROMWELL.

Ah! five women! I would prefer to hold despotic sway over five cities or five counties, aye, five kingdoms more!

THURLOW.

What! you, who govern England and all Europe . . .

CROMWELL.

Marry a peasant to the master of the world!

My friend, I am a slave!

THURLOW.

My lord, you might have . . .

CROMWELL.

No. The even balance of my destiny is marred. In the one scale is Europe, but my wife is in the other!

THURLOW.

Were I in your place, a woman . . .

CROMWELL (sternly).

Sirrah, you are overbold to dream of that!

THURLOW (abashed).

My lord, what I was saying . . .

CROMWELL.

Very good! enough of that! What news have you to tell me?

(He takes his seat in a large easy chair.)

(He takes one of his papers).

Scotland.—The Marquis of Argyle, grand

provost, doth make known his purpose to

surrender. The whole North doth make sub-

mission to the Lord Protector.

CROMWELL.

Well? (He takes his seat in the large arm-chair.)

THURLOW.

Flanders.—The Spaniards are prepared to

yield. Dunkirk will soon be ceded to the

Lord Protector.

(Cromwell hesitates a moment as if annoyed, then

Well? (He takes his seat in the large arm-chair.)

THURLOW.

London.—Two transients of great size are

lying in the Thames, with millions

taken from the Portuguese by Blake on three

great galleons.

CROMWELL.

Well?

THURLOW.

The Duke of Holstein sends to the Lord

Protector eight gray Frisian horses.

CROMWELL.

Well?

THURLOW.

That all may see that, even though he gave

asylum to Prince Rupert, he hath thereof



CROMWELL

ACT SECOND SCENE X

THE SPIES

CROMWELL.

Explain yourself.

CARR. (He takes his seat in the large arm-chair.)

A dark conspiracy is brewing . . .

(He points to Thurlow's stool, as Cromwell is standing with uncovered head.)

Be seated, Cromwell. Put thy hat upon thy head.

(Cromwell hesitates a moment as if annoyed, then puts on his hat, and sits down on the stool.)

Above all, interrupt me not !

CROMWELL (aside .

For all these airs, my friend, thou shouldst at any other moment pay me dear !

G. G. G. G.

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CROMWELL.

Well?

THURLOW.

The Duke of Holstein sends to the Lord Protector eight gray Frisian horses.

CROMWELL.

Well?

THURLOW.

That all may see that, even though he gave asylum to Prince Rupert, he hath thereof

most bitterly repented, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, to whom our Blake hath had a word to say, doth send you all the golden sequins twenty mules can carry.

CROMWELL.

Well?

THURLOW (taking up another document, to which a seal is appended by a cord of green silk).

The Oxford schoolmen, once your rivals, now do choose you chancellor of the old university.

(He hands the parchment to Cromwell.)

And this is the diploma.

CROMWELL.

Well?

THURLOW (fumbling among his papers).

Ah! His Serenity the Czar of Muscovy doth humbly crave of your good-will a public testimony.

CROMWELL.

Well?

THURLOW (in an anxious tone, holding a letter in his hand).

My lord, my lord, here is a secret warning that your Highness is to be assassinated on the morrow.

CROMWELL.

Well?

THURLOW.

The scheme 's concocted by the leading officers acting in concert with the cavaliers . . .

CROMWELL (interrupting him impatiently).

Well?

THURLOW.

Have you no wish, my lord, for more detail concerning this mysterious affair?

CROMWELL.

'T is some new fable! Let us run through the list. What else?

THURLOW.

The marshal of the Polish diet . . .

CROMWELL (interrupting him afresh).

Are there no letters from Cologne?

THURLOW (looking among his papers).

Aye, but there is but one.

CROMWELL.

From whom?

THURLOW.

From Manning, your agent who keeps watch on Charles.

CROMWELL.

Ah! give it me!

(He takes the letter and hastily breaks the seal.)

'T is of the fifth. How all these tidings lag upon the way! 't is twenty days from date!

(He reads the letter and exclaims while reading it.)

Ah! Davenant! a pretty trick, in sooth! At night—and all the lights put out. How could one palter better with an oath? He needs must be a Papist. Ah! the royal message hidden in his hat. Most wise precaution! But my curiosity is rampant. Thurlow, send to Master Davenant to say I fain would see him. He lodges at the *Siren*, close by London Bridge . . .

(Exit Thurlow.)

We 'll see which of us two will profit by his ruse. Ye marplots! know that in the darkness where ye crawl, I have a torch whose light is never quenched!

(Enters Thurlow.)

Let us continue. Have you seen him of Spain?

THURLOW.

He offers Calais, on condition that you do forthwith relieve Dunkirk.

CROMWELL (reflecting).

France offers Dunkirk and Spain offers Calais. But the circumstance that somewhat mars their common generosity is this: Calais

belongs to France, Dunkirk to Spain, and each of these two kings doth offer me my choice among his neighbor's towns; and each doth seek my favor to secure by giving me in pledge a conquest to be made. I must remain on friendly terms with the French king. What do I gain by being false to him? The other offers even less.

THURLOW (continuing his report).

As do the Vaudois, so the persecuted Protestants of Nîmes implore your generous assistance.

CROMWELL.

We will write the cardinal-minister in their behalf. But when will he be tolerant, in God's name?

THURLOW (continuing).

Devereux has carried Armagh by assault, and thus doth Chaplain Peters write devoutly, touching that event: "The Lord hath blessed the arms of Israel. Armagh at last has fallen! Old men, women, children we did smite with fire and sword: at least two thousand are no more; blood flows on every side; I have but now returned from giving thanks to God!"

CROMWELL (with enthusiasm).

A worthy saint is Peters!

THURLOW.

Must we spare the remnant of that race?

CROMWELL.

Wherefore, I pray to know? No mercy to the Papists! Let us be to them like to a blazing torch amid a field of grain!

THURLOW (bowing).

'T is said.

CROMWELL.

In Armagh is a vacant pulpit; we appoint this Peters to the vacancy; his letter is most eloquent.

(Thurlow bows again.)

THURLOW (resuming his report).

The emperor would know why you do hold in readiness fresh armaments, equipped at great expense.

CROMWELL (excitedly).

Let him leave war to us, and keep him to his festivals! With his two-headed eagle and his Aulic Council what has the emperor to do with me? Thinks he to frighten me? The worthy German! All because, on days of ceremony, in his hand he bears a globe of painted wood, the which he calls the world! Go to! Thunder that never strikes, but roars forever!

(He motions to Thurlow to continue.)

THURLOW.

Colonel Titus, imprisoned for a libel . . .

CROMWELL.

A knave! what would he have?

THURLOW.

My lord, his liberty. These nine months he has lain, forgotten on the straw, in a vile dungeon.

CROMWELL.

Nine months! 't is impossible!

THURLOW.

'T was in October that he was imprisoned, now 't is June. Count for yourself, my lord.

CROMWELL (counting on his fingers).

'T is true.

THURLOW.

And there the poor man has remained through these long months, dying of want, alone, unclothed and frozen.

CROMWELL.

Nine months! God! how time doth fly!

(A pause.)

What steps hath the committee of the Parliament taken, touching our present project?

THURLOW.

Purefoy, Goffe, Pride and Nicholas have spoken out against you, and Garland above all.

CROMWELL (indignantly).

The regicide!

THURLOW.

But all in vain will they have struggled 'gainst the rising tide. With us is the majority; the crown is yours by right, Lord Pembroke says—a former peer who hath survived the flood.

CROMWELL (scornfully).

A shallow-brain!

THURLOW.

Colonel John Birch alone, although he leans to the majority, doth hold the matter in abeyance, all for some vain scruple borrowed from the Bible.

CROMWELL.

There is somewhat owing him at the excise. Prompt payment will suffice to do away with all his scruples,—if the cashier do but make a trifling error in his favor. For your own part, Thurlow, if 't is possible, I pray you name the Holy Bible with more veneration.

THURLOW (bowing with great humility).

Flagg avers that your ambition causes him to take his stand against you.

CROMWELL.

Him I make Sergeant of the City.

THURLOW.

Trenchard, too, seems sullen and dissatisfied.

CROMWELL.

A tithe to Trenchard of the goods of the Montrose!

THURLOW.

Sir Gilbert Pickering, the bribe-accepting judge, gives token of recalcitrancy.

CROMWELL.

Let him be a baron of th' Exchequer.

THURLOW.

Leave the rest to me. I pray my lord to deign to let me follow my own course. To-day you will most humbly be entreated, in the name of Parliament, to accept the crown!

CROMWELL.

At last I have this most elusive sceptre well within my grasp! At last my feet have climbed e'en to the summit of the mount of sand!

THURLOW.

But you have reigned, my lord, these many months.

CROMWELL.

Nay, nay! I have the power, but I've not the name! Thou smilest, Thurlow. Ah! thou knowest not the void that covetous ambition leaves within our hearts! nor how it leads us to defy pain, toil and danger, everything in fine, to gain what seems a frivolous result! How hard it is to rest content with partial consummation! Furthermore, a sort of halo, wherein heaven's glory is reflected, hath from earliest ages shone about the person of a king. The very words, *King*, *Majesty*, are magical! What boots it to be arbiter of the whole world, and not be king? the thing without the name! the power without the title! Trifles light as air! Go to! the power and the rank are indivisible. Thou canst not know, my friend, how it doth

harass one who leaves the common herd behind, and nears the topmost pinnacle, to feel that there is something still above his head! Aye, were it but a name, that name is all the world.

(At this point Cromwell, who has so far forgotten himself as to lay his hand familiarly upon Thurlow's shoulder, turns about with a start and gazes at a low door concealed behind the hangings, as it slowly turns upon its hinges. Manasseh-Ben-Israel appears, and pauses upon the threshold, darting a keen glance about the hall, and following it with a low bow.)

SCENE VI

CROMWELL, THURLOW; MANASSEH-BEN-ISRAEL, an old Jew rabbi, in a tattered gray frock; his back is bent almost double; his piercing eyes gleam from beneath heavy white eyebrows; bald head, wrinkled brow, unkempt beard.

MANASSEH.

May God direct your footsteps, good my lord!

CROMWELL.

'T is the Jew Manasseh.

(To Thurlow.)

Finish your dispatches, Thurlow.

(Thurlow takes his seat at the great table. Cromwell draws near the Jew.)

(In an undertone.)

What wouldst thou?

MANASSEH (in an undertone).

I have late news. A Swedish vessel, laden with gold caroluses for the exiled king's adherents, has cast anchor in the Thames, your lordship.

CROMWELL.

'T is a neutral flag. But if, by thy assistance, I can deftly confiscate the whole, one-half the booty will belong to thee.

MANASSEH.

Is 't so? The ship is yours, my lord! Do you but look to it that help will be at hand in case of need.

CROMWELL. (He writes a few words upon a piece of paper, which he hands to him.)

Here is a never-failing talisman, my ancient sorcerer. Fly, and return anon to tell me its effect.

MANASSEH.

Another word, my lord!

CROMWELL.

Say on.

MANASSEH.

I feel in duty bound to warn your lordship that your Richard doth conspire with the cavaliers.

CROMWELL.

Thou sayest?

MANASSEH.

Clifford's debt to me he did discharge. 'T is most significant.

CROMWELL (laughing).

Thou seest everything in thy strong-box. My son is wayward, foolish in his intimacies, nothing more.

MANASSEH.

To pay, and not to count the pistoles! something is toward!

CROMWELL (shrugging his shoulders).

Enough; begone!

MANASSEH.

My lord, in pity's name, since I do sometimes have the happiness to be of use to you, by way of recompense, open our synagogues, revoke the law against astrologers!

CROMWELL (dismissing him with a gesture).

We will take thought thereon.

MANASSEH (bowing to the ground).

We kiss your feet.

(Aside.)

Accursed Christians!

CROMWELL.

Live in peace.

(Aside.)

Vile Jew, made to be hanged between two
dogs!

(Exit Manasseh by the low door which closes behind
him.)

SCENE VII

CROMWELL, THURLOW.

THURLOW.

My lord! will not you deign to listen to me now? This stranger craft, the money destined for the malcontents, the warning of the Jew, is not all in accord with what I said but now? Open your eyes.

CROMWELL.

To what?

THURLOW.

To these infernal plots, whereof the brewing is made known to me by trusty friends. I shudder at the little we already know.

CROMWELL.

Go to! if, every time that such a tale were dinned into my ears, I should occupy my thought in giving credence to it, and my time in seeking to unearth the plot denounced, would all my days and nights, or my whole life suffice?

THURLOW.

The present case, my lord, to me seems most alarming.

CROMWELL.

Fie! Blush, Thurlow, for thy panic fear. I know full well that some there be to whom my yoke seems tyrannous; that certain generals like not the thought of seeing in their equal of to-day their monarch of to-morrow. But I have the army with me. Touching the gold of which the Jew hath spoken, 't is a present from my good friend Charles, and comes most opportunely at this moment to defray the outlay for my coronation. Have no fear, my friend. Consider how our brains have been times out of mind tormented by these false reports. These oft-recurring plots are but a trick of jealous malcontents, reduced, by impotence for harm, to entertain themselves at our expense.

(Footsteps are heard without. Cromwell glances toward a gallery at the side of the stage.)

Here come the courtiers in their holiday array. I go to take the air; deal thou with them, good Thurlow.

(Exit through the small door.)

SCENE VIII

THURLOW, WHITELOCKE; WALLER, the poet; SERGEANT MAYNARD, in his gown; COLONEL JEPHSON, in uniform; COLONEL GRACE, in uniform; SIR WILLIAM MURRAY, in old-fashioned court dress; WILLIAM LENTHALL, formerly Speaker of the House of Commons; LORD BROGHILL, in court dress; CARR.

(Carr comes last upon the stage, and remains in the background, looking about with a scandalized air, while the others converse without observing him.)

WHITELOCKE (to Thurlow).

His Highness is not here?

THURLOW.

He is not here, my lord.

LENTHALL (to Thurlow).

I am most anxious to remind him of my claims.

SERGEANT MAYNARD (to Thurlow).

I come upon a matter of great urgency.

COLONEL JEPHSON (to Thurlow).

'T is most important business brings me hither.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (to Thurlow).

This petition, which I tender to my lord, solicits an appointment in his court that is to be.

WALLER (to Thurlow).

My rule is not to importune his Highness. Nathless . . .

(They speak with great volubility, and almost all at the same moment. Thurlow seems to be struggling in vain to make himself heard, and to rid himself of their importunity.)

CARR (in a stentorian voice, with his eyes fixed on the ceiling).

Behold the recreated Sodom!

(All turn and stare at Carr in open-mouthed amazement; he stands like a statue, with his arms folded across his breast.)

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

What strange animal is this, in God's name?

CARR (gravely).

'T is a man. Ah! I can well conceive that he doth wear an aspect unfamiliar in this den, where Baal shows his face uncovered to the light, where none are seen save drunkards, actors, hawks, false prophets, ravening wolves, and dragons with a thousand heads, winged serpents, vultures, those who take the name of God in vain, and basilisks with fiery darts for tails!

WALLER (laughing).

If those are our likenesses, sir man, accept our thanks!

CARR (with increased animation).

Ye boon companions of the Evil one! the apple hath the taste of ashes; eat! Vampires of Israel, the people is no more; feed on its flesh, the flesh of heaven's elect, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of men of war, the flesh of horses!

WALLER (laughing louder than before).

By my halidome! these be no common dishes that you set before us. We do all enjoy, 't would seem, the honor without parallel of being basilisks who feed on horses!

(General hilarity among the courtiers.)

CARR (in a towering rage).

Laugh, ye mouths of hell!

WALLER (ironically).

I love sweet courtesy.

ALL.

Cast out the knave!

LENTIALL. (He goes to Carr, and tries to induce him to take his leave.)

Come, good man; if his Highness should come in . . .

(They try to eject him, but he resists.)

CARR.

'T is not for me to leave this place, but you.

WHITELOCKE.

He is a saint.

WALLER.

Say, rather, he is mad.

CARR.

Ye all are drunken! Drunken with pride, with error, with the dregs of wine; and ye dare dub my wisdom madness!

LORD BROGHILL.

But, my friend, his Highness will be here anon . . .

CARR.

I do await him.

LORD BROGHILL.

Wherefore, in God's name?

CARR.

I needs must speak upon the instant to this Ichabod whom ye call *Highness*!

LORD BROGHILL.

To my ear confide the matter that doth interest you; I will be your mouth-piece and my influence . . . I am Lord Broghill.

CARR (bitterly).

Ah! how Oliver has changed! An old republican doth make a blot upon his retinue! Broghill—a cavalier—doth offer me his patronage 'neath Cromwell's roof!

THURLOW (after scrutinizing Carr closely for some time. Aside).

Yon fellow's known to me. His meaning is not clear; but mad or no, methinks the villain would be less at home in Bedlam than in London Tower. I go to seek my lord.

(Exit Thurlow.)

SCENE IX

THE SAME: except THURLOW.

LORD BROGHILL (patronizingly, to Carr).

Aye, I would gladly answer for you, friend,
but . . .

CARR (with a sad smile).

Even so! 't was thus the devil did in Sion
offer the Son of Man his guaranty.

WHITELOCKE.

Intractable!

WALLER.

Incurable!

ALL.

Enough of parleying! Out with him!

(They advance again upon Carr, who gazes fixedly at them.)

CARR.

Back! I must have speech of him, who, in
our soldiers' eyes, was Judas Maccabæus,
but whom they soon will liken unto Judas
Iscaiot!

LORD BROGHILL.

Out, fool!

WALLER.

An excellent periphrasis for Cromwell!

CARR.

I am the angel sent to caution Lot, ere
Sodom be consumed by Heaven's avenging
flame.

WALLER (laughing).

How now! the angels of the Lord are
shorn like thee!

COLONEL JEPHSON (laughing).

I see with joy that thou dost rise in rank.
From man thou art transformed to angel.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (pushing Carr toward
the door).

Think'st thou, friend, to bore my lord with
visions?

(To the others.)

Certes, he would turn his thoughts away
from our petition!

(Roughly, to Carr.)

Out!

COLONEL JEPHSON.

Out!

SERGEANT MAYNARD.

Out!

ALL.

Out with him! quickly!

CARR (gravely).

Cease, I bid you, in this wise to speak to
me.

SERGEANT MAYNARD.

My lord would send you to the Tower,
should he see you here.

(Carr glances at him with a shrug.)

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (pointing to Carr's puri-
tanical garb).

Is this a fitting costume for a court?

LENTHALL.

My lord could hardly, without derogation
from his self-respect, address thee.

ALL.

Out!

(They throw themselves upon Carr, and try to eject him.)

CARR (struggling, in a tone of entreaty).

O God of men of war! O God of Sabaoth!
upon me deign to cast thine eye!

ALL (pushing him toward the door).

Begone!

CARR (continuing his invocation, with his eyes fixed
on the ceiling).

I battle in thy cause with the leviathan!

(Enters Cromwell with Thurlow. All the courtiers pause, remove their hats and bow to the ground. Carr replaces his hat, which has fallen off in the scuffle, upon his head, and resumes his austere, contemplative attitude.)

CROMWELL (gazing at Carr in surprise).

'T is Carr, the independent!

(To the others, with a scornful gesture.)

Go!

(Aside.)

'T is most mysterious!

(The courtiers, in speechless amazement, go off the stage with deep reverences. Carr remains unmoved.)

WALLER (in an undertone to Lenthall, pointing to Carr).

His prophecy 's accomplished. Let us
leave Lot with the angel.

SCENE X

CARR, CROMWELL.

(Cromwell, left alone with Carr, gazes at him for some time in silence with a severe and almost threatening expression. Carr, calm and grave, with his arms folded across his chest, meets the protector's gaze unflinchingly. At last Cromwell opens the conversation, in a haughty tone.)

CROMWELL.

Carr, the Long Parliament imprisoned you. Who gave you back your freedom?

CARR (tranquilly).

Treachery.

CROMWELL (astounded and alarmed).

What say you?

(Aside.)

Is he mad?

CARR (musing).

Yes, I affronted the supreme assembly of the saints. Now, we are all proscribed beneath thy law; I, culpable, by them; they, innocent, by thee!

CROMWELL.

Since you commend the judgment that consigned you to a prison cell, why break your chains?

CARR (shrugging his shoulders).

'T was treachery, I tell thee! They who set me free were luring me unwary toward a greater crime. I saw the snare ere 't was too late.

CROMWELL.

What was the snare, I prithee?

CARR.

Baal is born again!

CROMWELL.

Explain yourself.

CARR. (He takes his seat in the large arm-chair.)

A dark conspiracy is brewing . . .

(He points to Thurlow's stool, as Cromwell is standing with uncovered head.)

Be seated, Cromwell. Put thy hat upon thy head.

(Cromwell hesitates a moment as if annoyed, then puts on his hat, and sits down on the stool.)

Above all, interrupt me not!

CROMWELL (aside).

For all these airs, my friend, thou shouldst at any other moment pay me dear!

CARR (with mild gravity).

Albeit Oliver counts not his crimes, albeit of his hundred victims there 's not one that causes him remorse; albeit in his horror-laden days he doth unceasingly unite hypocrisy to schism, ruse to frenzy . . .

CROMWELL (starting to his feet indignantly).

Sirrah!

CARR.

Thou interruptest me!

(Cromwell resumes his seat with an air of forced resignation. Carr continues.)

Albeit Oliver doth dwell in Egypt with the Moabite, the Babylonian, the Aryan; albeit

he doth naught for Israel, but everything to serve his own base ends; albeit he doth hold the saints aloof and seek companionship among the Ammonites, Amalekites and Edomites; albeit he doth bend the knee to Dagon, Astaroth and Elim, and the serpent is his dearest friend; albeit he, thereby inviting the just wrath of God, hath trampled under foot the ancient privileges of the people, driven forth the Parliament that Sion did convoke, and hath with his own mouth said *Raca!* to the brethren of Christ; despite so many and so grievous crimes, I cannot deem thy heart so hard, thy soul so black, I cannot think that thou art Heaven-forsaken to that point, that thou wilt not confess, in Israel's sight, that for this wretched, bleeding English nation, lying with reeking sores upon Job's ash-heap, of all the blessings it can owe to fate, thy death would be the greatest blessing, Cromwell.

CROMWELL (recoiling).

My death, sayest thou?

CARR (amiably).

Thou dost constantly break in upon my discourse, Cromwell! Be thyself! the incense of servility intoxicates thee; cease for a little space to be the partisan of thine own fortunes, and let us talk together without anger. Aye, thy death would be a signal boon! the greatest of all boons!

CROMWELL (with increasing indignation).

Rash man!

CARR (imperturbably).

For my own part, my brother, my conviction is so firm, that I do always carry 'neath my cloak, until thy day shall come, this knife. (He draws a long dagger and points it at Cromwell.)

CROMWELL (starting back in terror).

A dagger! The assassin! Ho! without there! Help!

(To Carr.)

In pity's name, good Carr! . . .

(Aside.)

'T is rare good fortune that I wear a cuirass!

CARR (replacing the dagger in his breast).

Fear not, Cromwell! do not call for help!

CROMWELL (still terrified).

Hell's furies!

CARR.

When one slays a tyrant, does one first display the weapon to him? Have no fear, as yet thy hour has not struck. Indeed, I came to rescue thy devoted head from the foul blows of an avenging blade less pure than this.

CROMWELL (aside).

What can he mean?

CARR.

Be seated once again. Thy life at this hour is to me more sacred than to the hungry hind the flesh of swine, or Jonah's carcass to the huge leviathan that saved him from the surges in his cavernous maw.

(Cromwell resumes his seat, and eyes Carr with curiosity mingled with suspicion.)

CROMWELL (aside).

I needs must be resigned and let him have his say.

CARR.

Hark ye. A plot exists against thy life, and thou dost doubtless understand that, if thy life alone were threatened by that plot, I would not waste my time and breath to give thee warning of it. Rather thou wilt do me justice and believe that to conspire with the saints in such a cause would be Carr's glory.

But herein 't is Israel's salvation that 's at stake. In saving Israel, I save thee by the way; so let it be.

CROMWELL.

Is it a veritable plot? Know you where the conspirators do hold their meetings?

CARR.

I did leave the place but now.

CROMWELL.

Is 't so? pray, who did throw the Tower open to you?

CARR.

Tremble! Barkstead!

CROMWELL.

He is false to me! And yet he signed the king's death-warrant!

CARR.

Hope of pardon won him over to your enemies.

CROMWELL.

Their aim, then, is to re-establish Stuart?

CARR.

Hark ye once again. When I repaired at daybreak to the rendezvous, I hoped in all sincerity that 't was the first great object of the plot to free the people by inflicting death on thee . . .

CROMWELL.

Accept my thanks!

CARR.

That then they would restore to the one lawful parliament its due authority usurped by thy unholy despotism. But hardly had I stepped within the door than I beheld a Philistine arrayed in velvet doublet slashed with satin. Three of them there were. The chief of the cabal began to sing me briefs and bulls and quatrains . . .

CROMWELL.

Quatrains?

CARR.

'T is the name they give their pagan psalmody. Anon came saints, all men of holy lives; but oh! their eyes, bewitched by heathen charms, smiled on the demons mingled with the angels there. The demons shouted: "Death to Cromwell!" but beneath their breaths they said: "Seek we our profit in their fierce disputes; Gomorrha will give place to Babylon, the roofs of sycamore to roofs of cedar, bricks to stones, restraint to license, brazen rod to iron sceptre, Tyre to Dor . . ."

CROMWELL.

And Cromwell to Charles Second?

CARR.

'T is their dream. But Jacob wills not that his ox be sacrificed with his own sword, unless he have his part; that Cromwell to the profit of the Stuarts be laid low. Between two ills we e'en must fear the worse. And wicked as thou art, I much prefer thy empire to a Stuart, Herod, royal profligate, a parasitic growth of the old oak! Confound these plotters, therefore, by my voice denounced to thee!

CROMWELL (laying his hand upon his shoulder).

My friend, I am most grateful to thee for the warning.

(Aside.)

Stars of heaven! Thurlow was not wrong, i' faith!

(To Carr, coaxingly.)

And so the rival parties of the king and parliament are leagued against me? On the royal side who are the leaders?

CARR.

Think'st thou that a list of them was given me? I care no more, my friend, for those

accursed devils than for the straw whereon I slept for seven weary years! And yet, if I am well served by my memory, they spake the names aloud of Rochester—Lord Ormond . . .

CROMWELL (hastily seizing pen and paper).

Art thou sure of it, my friend? In London—they!

(He writes their names upon the paper.)

Come, make an effort to recall the others' names.

CARR (slowly, as if searching his memory).

Sedley . . .

CROMWELL (writing).

Aha!

CARR.

Drogheda—Clifford—Rosebery . . .

CROMWELL (still writing).

The libertines!

(He draws nearer to Carr, and addresses him with increased amiability and in a yet more coaxing tone.)

What of the leaders on the people's side?

CARR (recoiling indignantly).

Avaunt! What! I, betray to thee our saints, the eyes from out our head! No, not if thou shouldst offer me ten thousand golden shekels, as Saul the king unto the witch of Endor; not if thou shouldst bid some eunuch try the keen edge of a sword upon my neck; not if, for my rebellion, me, like Daniel, thou shouldst consign unto the den of lions; not if thou shouldst order set alight a brazier of bitumen, horrible to see, and seven times more hot than such are wont to be; not if, like Ananias, I should see the flames shoot up about me, shedding a red light upon the houses thronged with impious multitudes, and soaring to the height of nine and thirty cubits!

CROMWELL.

Calm thyself.

CARR.

No, not if thou shouldst give me all the fruitful fields that lie in Thebes, the Tigris and Libanus, Tyre of the golden doors, and Ecbatana, built of quarried stone, a thousand oxen, and the citron of the Nile, an earthly throne, and all the craft of that magician who did cause the flames to issue from the wave, and summoned with his whistle from the farthest corners of the globe, across the boundless azure plains, the fly of Egypt and the Assyrian bee! No, not if thou shouldst make me colonel in the army!

CROMWELL (aside).

Difficult it is by force to open a closed mouth, and I'll not try it!

(Extending his hand to Carr.)

Carr, we are old friends. Even as two mile-stones, God has placed us in his pasture.

CARR.

Over far hath Cromwell traveled for a mile-stone!

CROMWELL.

Brother, thou hast rescued me from pressing danger. I shall not forget it. Cromwell's saviour . . .

CARR (abruptly).

Nay, insult me not! 'T was Israel alone Carr sought to save.

CROMWELL (aside).

Ah! overweening sectary, I needs must humor thee! Must lick the hand that wounds me! at my age, and in my lofty station!

(Aloud, with humility.)

What am I? a poor earth-worm.

CARR.

Aye, there I do agree with thee! Thou art to the Eternal One a worm, and nothing more, like Attila; to us, thou art a serpent! Dost thou seek the crown?

CROMWELL (with tears in his eyes).

How little thou dost know me! Though the pomp of power doth encompass me, my heart is sore afflicted. Pity me!

CARR (with a bitter smile).

O God of Jacob! Hearest thou this Nimrod who doth feign the sufferings of Job?

CROMWELL (in a pitiful tone).

I know that I do well deserve the saints' rebuke.

CARR.

Go to! the Lord doth in thy kindred punish thee!

CROMWELL (surprised).

How now! what meanest thou?

CARR (triumphantly).

There is another name wherewith thou mayest swell thy list. But no, why speak? The crime is punished by the vice.

(Cromwell, whose suspicions are aroused by this reticence, hastily draws near to Carr.)

CROMWELL.

What name is that? The name, I say! for such a service, thou mayest ask, demand whate'er thou wilt.

CARR (as if struck by a sudden thought).

In very truth? Wilt thou keep to thy promise?

CROMWELL.

'T is as sacred as an oath.

CARR.

I may for a price lay bare thy wound.

CROMWELL (aside with contemptuous satisfaction).

These incorruptible republicans are all alike at heart to him who flatters them or pays them well; their virtue, soft as wax, doth quickly melt in my sun's rays.

(Aloud.)

My brother, what dost thou demand? an ancient title? rank? a broad domain?

CARR.

What 's that?

CROMWELL.

What is thy price? pray tell me.

CARR.

Abdicate.

CROMWELL (aside).

He is incorrigible!

(Aloud, after a moment's thought.)

Am I king, my friend, that I should abdicate?

CARR.

Mere subterfuge! How now! already dost thou fail to keep thy word?

CROMWELL (abashed).

Nay, nay!

CARR.

I see that thou dost waver.

CROMWELL (sighing).

Woe is me! a hundred times I have done violence to my own wishes to refrain from laying down my power. My power is my cross.

CARR (shaking his head).

Thou dost in no wise, Cromwell, mend thy plight. A camel might, I ween, more easily pass through a needle's eye, or the leviathan be swallowed by an eel, than he who 's rich in this world's goods, and powerful, could pass through heaven's portal!

CROMWELL (*aside*).

The fanatic!

CARR (*aside*).

Hypocrite!

(*Aloud.*)

In captious speech thou dost expend thy breath to no avail.

CROMWELL (*contritely*).

My brother, deign to hear me. I grant you that my power is unjust, and arbitrary; but, good Carr, in all Judea, Gad and Issachar, exists no man on whom it weighs so heavily as on myself. I loathe these vanities so bitterly that I am often tempted to seek refuge in the bowels of the earth,—these words that give back, like the walls of tombs, a hollow sound; throne, sceptre, empty honors, all bequeathed to us by Charles; false gods, which are not Alpha or Omega! Nathless, I cannot suddenly fling back unto this people, whom I love, the supreme power, until the hour when the twenty-four old men and the four beasts shall come to reign in our villages. Go, therefore; seek Saint John and Selden, jurisconsults, judges for the laws, and learned doctors for the forms of worship. Bid them formulate a plan of government, which will permit me forthwith to lay down my burden. Art thou satisfied?

CARR (*shaking his head*).

Nay, none too well. These learned doctors oftentimes are oracles of doubtful worth. But, for my part, I will not leave thee half enlightened.

CROMWELL (*eagerly*).

Tell me, pray, who is this other enemy? What is his name?

CARR.

'T is Richard Cromwell.

CROMWELL (*deeply grieved*).

My own son!

CARR (*unmoved*).

Himself. Now, Cromwell, art thou satisfied?

CROMWELL (*stupefied by the shock*).

Vice,—vice and blasphemy have led him slowly on to parricide. The Jew was right! The blow is from on high! I slew my king! My son will slay his father!

CARR.

What wouldst thou have? viper engenders viper. 'T is hard, I grant you that, to see one's son a felon; to have an Absalom, although thou art no David. Touching the death of Charles, wherein thou thinkest to detect thy crime, 't is the one holy, virtuous and lawful act, whereby the crushing weight of all thy sins is lightened; 't is of thy life the fairest part.

CROMWELL (*who has not heard him*).

That Richard, whom I deemed to be a vain and thoughtless lad, light-hearted as the bird that sings and flies away, should seek my death!

(*With great earnestness, grasping Carr's hand.*)

But tell me, brother, art thou sure? My son . . . ?

CARR.

Was at the rendezvous this morning.

CROMWELL.

Where was this rendezvous?

CARR.

The *Three Cranes* tavern.

CROMWELL.

What said he?

CARR.

Oh! many things that from my mind have passed. He sang, then laughed aloud, and swore that he had paid the debts of Clifford.

CROMWELL (aside).

Ah! the Jew did say the same!

CARR.

But, last and worst of all, these eyes did see him drink to Herod's health!

CROMWELL.

To Herod's health! What Herod?

CARR.

Aye, to Balthazar's!

CROMWELL.

Thou sayest?

CARR.

Pharaoh's!

CROMWELL.

Perchance thou dost refer to . . . ?

CARR.

To the antichrist, by some called *King of Scots*, or Charles the Second!

CROMWELL (musing).

My son! atrocious villainy! To drink his health was e'en to toast my death! Songs, laughter, merry-making,—no remorse! Thou sportive parricide! some day, on thy pale brow, will *Cain* or *Sardanapalus* be written?

CARR.

Both.

(Enters Thurlow. He walks up to Cromwell with a mysterious air.)

THURLOW (in an undertone to Cromwell).

My lord, Sir Richard Willis is without.

(As soon as Thurlow appears, Cromwell resumes his serenity in appearance.)

CROMWELL.

Sir Richard Willis!

(Aside.)

He will expound this mystery to me.

(To Thurlow.)

I go to him.

THURLOW (pointing to the great door, through which the courtiers made their exit).

Have all these gentlemen, who stand about your door, your leave to enter?

CROMWELL.

Aye, since I must go.

(Aside.)

I must compose myself; 't is more becoming to be always at one's ease. Although my heart be flesh and blood, my brow should be of brass.

(Enter the courtiers under escort of Thurlow. They salute Cromwell, who waves his hand to them but addresses Carr.)

CROMWELL (taking Carr's hand).

I thank you, brother! we part but not for long; be one of us. To Carr will Cromwell ever give precedence over all. My power puts no limit to your wishes.

(Exit with Thurlow. All bow to the ground, save Carr.)

CARR (alone, at the front of the stage).

Thus he abdicates! th' accursed usurper!

SCENE XI

CARR, WHITELOCKE, WALLER, SERGEANT MAYNARD, COLONEL JEPHSON, COLONEL GRACE, SIR WILLIAM MURRAY, WILLIAM LENTHALL, LORD BROGHILL.

(The courtiers watch Cromwell's exit with disappointed faces, and eye Carr with surprise and envy.)

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (at the back of the stage, to the other courtiers).

Saw you how his Highness did address yon fellow? What benignity!

CARR (still alone in the foreground).

What villainy!

LENTHALL.

He deigned to smile on him!

CARR.

He dared insult me!

COLONEL JEPHSON.

What good fortune!

CARR.

What contumely! and how can I avenge myself?

WALLER.

'T is some new favorite.

CARR.

And so I am his victim! none so lowly that the tyrant doth not lay his heavy hand upon him.

MURRAY.

Everything 's for him!

CARR.

This Cromwell would despoil me of my virtue, my sole treasure! I, serve Nebuchadnezzar! I, a fawner at his court! Am I,

with Zion's eyes upon me, like the once white linen which the traders of the temple have dyed with saffron, indigo or purple, to change my name from Carr to Abednego?

MURRAY (scrutinizing Carr).

A something noble in his bearing doth impress me. We did judge him ill-advisedly at first.

CARR.

Am I a slave? For whom doth Cromwell take me?

LENTHALL (to William Murray).

He is a man of standing.

MURRAY.

Some one of high rank, beyond a peradventure. But his costume is not strictly . . .

CARR (still standing by himself).

Traitor!

LENTHALL (aside).

The friendly feeling that my lord did manifest for him should be most serviceable to one whose suit he might upon occasion deign to favor. What if he would be my friend? He has the master's ear.

(He approaches Carr with profuse reverences.)

My lord, would you, with unexampled kindness, deign to say to him you know, in my behalf, who am an honest citizen, my lord, one of those words that you do say so well?

I have a rightful claim to be made peer ; I am Master of the Rolls, and I . . .

CARR (gazing at him with amazement).

My harp I hung among the branches of the willow, and my country's hymns I sing not to the Babylonians who have invaded us.

(When they notice the step taken by Lenthall, all the courtiers rush forward and surround Carr.)

SERGEANT MAYNARD (aside).

To our petitions . . .

LENTHALL (to Maynard, with a gesture of discouragement).

He doth harbor enmity to us !

MURRAY (forcing his way through the crowd).

His Grace doth choose to be the sponsor of but one. My lord, espouse my cause ! As we are soon to make a king, I can, I think, be serviceable to his Highness. I am a noble Scotchman. In my childhood I enjoyed most signal favor in the household of the Prince of Wales. Whenever, yielding to his evil genius, his Royal Highness sinned, I had the privilege, unique and not to be despised, of taking all the whippings that the prince deserved.

CARR (with intense indignation).

Base sycophant ! thus, twice a villain, he was a vile, fawning slave to Stuart, as he is to-day to Cromwell. Like Miphiboseth, he limps with either leg.

WALLER (to Carr, offering him a paper).

My lord, my name is Waller, I have here some dithyrambs upon the capture of the Spanish galleons.

CARR.

'T is gold that doth inspire and reward thy muse, thou worshiper of Noll !

COLONEL JEPHSON (to Carr).

My lord, I pray you, mention my name to his Highness, Colonel Jephson. My mother was a countess. 'T is my wish to be admitted to the House of Peers.

SERGEANT MAYNARD (to Carr).

I prithee say to the protector all that I for him have given up. George Cony, upon whom an unjust tax was laid, chose me to be his advocate. My table is but poorly furnished ; nathless I refused !

CARR (aside).

The poison of the asp is mingled in their jargon with the dragon's gall.

MURRAY (to Carr).

A word of commendation at the foot of my petition, good my lord !

CARR (roughly).

Go ask Beelzebub to sign thy scrawl !

MURRAY.

My lord is wroth !

(To the others.)

See how you all do weary him !

WALLER (to Carr).

I seek a place . . .

CARR.

In the fools' hospital ?

COLONEL GRACE (laughing).

A fit abode for poets !

(To Carr.)

Lend your sanction to my suit.

CARR.

No, Noah had no more wild beasts about him in the ark !

COLONEL JEPHSON.

My lord, 't was I who first proposed in Parliament that Cromwell be made king . . .

MURRAY.

Write but four words, my lord !

CARR (in a frenzy of rage).

My lord ! my lord ! a murrain on their
tongues ! The clank of fetters is sweet melody

beside their chattering. I much prefer a jailer
to these priests of Baal, the Tower of London
to the Tower of Babel. To prison I return.
—May Israel confound them !

(He forces his way through the throng of courtiers and
exit.)

SCENE XII

THE SAME, except CARR: afterward THURLOW.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

What said he of the Towers of Babel and of London?

SERGEANT MAYNARD.

This friend of my lord says that he returns to prison!

He is mad! WALLER.

LENTHALL.

What reason has his Highness to be gracious to yon Bedlamite!

(Enters Thurlow.)

THURLOW (saluting).

I come at the protector's bidding. His Highness is unable to receive to-day.

COLONEL JEPHSON (angrily).

Cromwell receives yon knave, and none but him!

(The courtiers go off the stage with signs of dissatisfaction. At that moment the masked door is seen to open. Cromwell appears, and peers cautiously about.)

SCENE XIII

CROMWELL, SIR RICHARD WILLIS.

CROMWELL (turning back toward the half-opened door).

They are gone. Come in, and as you deem it of importance that you be not seen, go hence by this same door.

(Enters Sir Richard Willis. He is enveloped in a cloak, and wears a broad-brimmed hat which conceals his features: there are no signs of suffering or exhaustion in his gait or his voice. They walk together part way across the stage. Cromwell halts abruptly, and clasps his hands.)

I can no longer doubt! my oldest son! my Richard . . .

SIR RICHARD WILLIS.

Drank the health of King Charles Stuart; all the conspirators, your mortal enemies, whose brother he did dub himself, esteemed him rash therefor.

CROMWELL.

Ungrateful son! when I exalt his destiny to heirship to the throne! Sir Richard, name the Puritans to me.

WILLIS.

First, Lambert.

CROMWELL (with a scornful laugh).

Lambert! truly it doth grieve me that so bold a plot should have so great a dastard for its moving spirit! Power depends much less on genius than on chance. Great God! how plentiful are the Vitelliuses for one Cæsar! Always doth the common herd with its degrading hands engraft a something base

upon all great ideas. Rome's standard was a truss of hay.

(To Willis.)

Continue.

WILLIS.

Ludlow.

CROMWELL.

Witless knave! he 'll not go far. Brute but no Brutus.

WILLIS.

Syndercomb—and Barebones.

(As Willis repeats the names Cromwell follows him upon a list which he holds in his hand.)

CROMWELL.

If my memory 's not at fault, my own upholsterer. A simpleton!

WILLIS.

Joyce.

CROMWELL.

A clown!

WILLIS.

And Overton.

CROMWELL.

A learned ass!

WILLIS.

And Harrison.

CROMWELL.

A thief!

WILLIS.

And Wildman.

CROMWELL.

A poor fool! he was surprised dictating to his valet sonorous periods against myself. Why this is purest comedy!

WILLIS.

One Carr.

CROMWELL.

I know the man.

WILLIS.

And Garland—and Plinlimmon.

CROMWELL.

What! Plinlimmon?

WILLIS.

Aye, and Barkstead, one of the king's executioners!

CROMWELL (as if suddenly awakened).

Know you to whom you speak?

WILLIS (bowing, in dire confusion).

Ah! sire, pardon me, I pray! A habit of long standing acquired in my service with the other family. In no wise can the word affect your Majesty.

CROMWELL (aside).

His flattery adds venom to the blow he dealt me. Bungling fool!

(Aloud.)

Enough of that.

(Pointing to the list.)

Are all the Puritans herein set down?

WILLIS.

Yes, sire.

CROMWELL (aside).

I'll order an inquiry.

(Aloud.)

The leaders of the cavaliers?

WILLIS.

I have your generous consent to keep their names a secret. They are former friends whom to betray would cause me bitter pain; moreover, I keep watch on them; in any case they'll not escape.

CROMWELL.

So be it.

(Aside.)

Every coward has his scruples.

(Aloud.)

Yes, respect the secret of your friends.

(Aside.)

Besides, I know their names. How different are the men who gave me the two lists, Willis the Puritans, and Carr the royalists!

WILLIS.

And, sire, you will also spare their lives! Upon my honor, my remorse would otherwise be unendurable.

CROMWELL (aside).

Upon his honor!

WILLIS.

Certes, I do render them most signal service, thus bespeaking clemency for them; I disembowel their conspiracy, because it moves my pity; and if I betray them, 't is—aye, 't is pure friendship!

CROMWELL.

Your salary henceforward is two hundred crowns.

(Between his teeth.)

The price of thy friends' blood whom thou deliverest to me! Thou tiger-cat! who bitest at the hand thou once didst fawn upon, and hast the trick of selling heads with great humanity!

WILLIS (who hears only the last word).

Ah! yes, humanity!

CROMWELL (opening his portfolio and taking therefrom a paper which he hands to him).

Here is thy draft.

WILLIS (bowing, as he takes it).

Still drawn upon the secret chest?

CROMWELL (with an affirmative nod).

Aye. By the way, did you not see this Davenant, the Stuarts' poet-laureate? He 's from the continent?

WILLIS.

Davenant? No, my prince.

CROMWELL.

He brings a letter—from someone you know—for Ormond.

WILLIS.

I saw nothing handed to the marquis, although I was upon the watch. I think that he was not with the conspirators.

CROMWELL (aside).

A useless tool! But I will speak with Davenant myself.

(Rochester, in the costume of a Puritan divine, appears at the back of the stage.)

SCENE XIV

CROMWELL, SIR RICHARD WILLIS, LORD ROCHESTER.

LORD ROCHESTER (at the rear of the stage).

Here am I at last! Let me con o'er my lesson. One must be the Puritan twice over when one doth speak to Cromwell and from Milton. Davenant hath served me well. He so effectively hath pulled the wool o'er Milton's eyes that I shall be Noll's chaplain ere an hour's past. By Heaven! if the devil flies away with me to-day, he'll fly away with Cromwell's almoner. Come, Wilmot, let the tragi-comedy begin! Thy daring head thrust boldly in the lion's mouth, and wear, without a murmur, for thy king's sake, this shocking hat, and these cloth breeches which do gall thy flesh; thou wilt see Frances once again.

(He spies Cromwell and Willis, who are talking earnestly together while he is speaking.)

But who are yon two men?

SIR RICHARD WILLIS (to Cromwell).

The money was sent over on a Swedish brig; and in his letter, Hyde, the late lord chancellor, informs me that a wealthy Jew doth also offer credit for the enterprise.

LORD ROCHESTER (in the background).

How now? they talk of correspondence with Sir Edward Hyde? Can it be true?

CROMWELL (to Willis).

Return with all speed to the Tower, lest suspicion be aroused.

LORD ROCHESTER (still in the background).

All this is most mysterious to me!

WILLIS (to Cromwell).

His Majesty is well aware of my profound devotion.

LORD ROCHESTER (still unseen).

Majesty! devotion! Marry, these be of the faithful,—cavaliers!

CROMWELL (to Willis, walking toward the door).

Let us avoid the notice of the sentinels! If anyone should see us our whole plan would be endangered.

(Exeunt Willis and Cromwell.)

LORD ROCHESTER (alone).

(He walks toward the front of the stage.)

Aye, well said! King Charles has most imprudent friends! Deuce take me! To come hither to discuss our projects! To conspire under Cromwell's very nose! 't is reckless past belief! Suppose some other than myself had overheard these words!

(Looking out into the gallery.)

How now! one of the two returns. 'T is best to frighten him; he must be made to realize how rashly he doth compromise himself. I will conceal myself.

(He hides behind one of the pillars. Enters Cromwell.)

SCENE XV

LORD ROCHESTER, CROMWELL.

CROMWELL.

(He has not seen Rochester.)

Alas! man doth propose, but God disposes. Safe in port I thought myself to be, and sheltered from the angry waves; and lo! I once again am launched upon a sea of plots! Once more the dice I throw with my head for the stake! But, courage! I will bid defiance to this latest tempest. I will strike a blow to freeze their blood with terror, crush who dares resist! this people needs must have a king.

LORD ROCHESTER (behind the pillar).

An ardent royalist upon my word!

CROMWELL.

I 'll cast a net about them; follow close upon their tracks; surround them with a chain they cannot see. I 'll blind their eyes and watch them; they shall not escape me.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Cromwell and his family he doth proscribe in the same breath.

CROMWELL.

They all shall die!

LORD ROCHESTER.

What, all? I cry you mercy for his daughter!

CROMWELL (gloomily musing).

Cromwell, in Heaven's name, what wouldst thou? Is 't the throne? And to what end?

Is thy name Stuart? Bourbon? or Plantagenet? Art thou one of those favored mortals, who, by virtue of their ancestry, have from the cradle looked with a master's eye upon the earth? What sceptre hast thou not, triumphant soldier, crushed with thy strong arm? What crown is broad enough to fit thy brow? Thou, king, thou child of fortune! in the eyes of future generations thy reign would be set down among thy lucky strokes! Thy family, thy dynasty!

LORD ROCHESTER.

He doth, 't is clear, uphold the Stuarts' claim.

CROMWELL.

A Parliament-made king! the bodies of thy victims for the steps whereon thou mountest! Is it thus that one attains a throne legitimately his? Ah! Cromwell, art thou not fatigued by thy long journey? has the sceptre in thy eyes some hidden charm? Reflect. The universe doth own thy power; in the hollow of thy hand thou holdest it, and 't is of little worth. The chariot of thy fortune, whence thou dost derive thy rights, rolls on, and spatters kings with blood of other kings! What! powerful in peace, all-conquering in war, is all of no account to thee within the throne? Paltry ambition!

LORD ROCHESTER.

How he belabors Cromwell!

CROMWELL.

If thou hadst this throne of England, and ten other thrones? What then? what wouldst thou do with them? whereon would thy ambition next alight? Is not an aim in life man's greatest need? 'Thou guilty fool!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Ah! Cromwell, if thou couldst but hear!

CROMWELL.

And when all 's said, what is a throne? a tripod 'neath a canopy; a plank or two, whereat the gaping crowd do stare, and called by different names, according to the stuff that covers them; if velvet 't is a throne; if coarse black cloth, a scaffold!

LORD ROCHESTER.

He 's a knowing fellow!

CROMWELL.

Cromwell, is it that that thou wouldst have? the scaffold? Ah! the very word doth fill me with dismay. My head is burning. I will open yonder window.

(He walks toward Charles the First's window.)

The fresh air and the sunlight will dispel my melancholy.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Verily he stands upon no ceremony. One would say 't was his own domicile.

(Cromwell tries to open the window, but it resists.)

CROMWELL.

'T is rarely opened, and the lock is rusted.

(Suddenly he recoils with a horrified air.)

'T is the window stained with Charles's blood! Yes, thence he winged his way toward heaven!

(He returns with a pensive air to the front of the stage.)

Were I king, mayhap 't would open with a better will!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Small chance of that!

CROMWELL.

If every crime must expiated be, then tremble, Cromwell! 'T was an impious deed. No nobler brow was ever shadowed by the royal canopy; a good man and a just was Charles the First.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Spoken like a loyal subject.

CROMWELL.

Could I, with my unassisted strength, control their murderous frenzy? Spared I aught, by way of vigil, fasting, prayer, to save the victim's life? The warrant for his death was signed in heaven.

LORD ROCHESTER.

'T was signed by Cromwell, too, who turned the scale by acting silently, whilst thou wert praying, thou ingenuous, pure-hearted man!

CROMWELL (in deep dejection).

How many, many times these palace-walls have caused my tears to flow for his sad fate, the noblest of all Englishmen!

LORD ROCHESTER (wiping away a tear).

The worthy man doth move me deeply.

CROMWELL.

What remorse the thought of that majestic head has caused me!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Nay, be not too hard upon thyself! regret mayhap, but why remorse?

CROMWELL (with his eyes fixed upon the floor).

What think the dead of us?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Poor man! his grief has turned his brain.

CROMWELL.

How many ills, before unknown, a crime reveals to us! How many times, O Charles, would I have given freely of my blood to give thee back thy life!

LORD ROCHESTER.

He speaks too loud. He 'll be detected here, and that would be a pity. 'Neath my breath I do full homage to his estimable sentiments; the place, however, is ill-chosen to express them; I will frighten him.

(He leaves his hiding-place, and walks quickly toward Cromwell.)

My friend, what do you here?

CROMWELL (taken by surprise, eyeing him from head to foot).

To whom is this knave speaking?

LORD ROCHESTER.

You.

(Aside.)

What says he? knave? I must have the true saintly air. So much the better. I will e'en act out my part.

(Aloud, and with a self-satisfied air.)

Good fellow, know you where you are?

CROMWELL.

And knowest thou to whom thou speakest, caitiff?

LORD ROCHESTER.

By my faith!

(Aside.)

God's death! I must not swear!

(Aloud.)

I know to whom I speak.

CROMWELL (aside).

Is he an assassin in King Charles's pay?

(He draws a pistol and aims it at Rochester.)

Thou villain, come not near!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

The devil! prudence. All these conspirators are armed to the teeth! I will not fall to blows for Cromwell with a brother.

(Aloud.)

Sir, I have no wish to cause your ruin.

CROMWELL (surprised, disdainfully).

Eh?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Nay, on the other hand, I come to give you counsel. Your soliloquy was too seditious for this place by far.

CROMWELL.

Mine?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Yours. Begone, or I will call for help.

CROMWELL.

The man is mad.

(Aloud.)

Who art thou, to speak thus to me?

LORD ROCHESTER.

You are, forget it not, beneath the Lord Protector's roof.

CROMWELL.

Who art thou?

LORD ROCHESTER.

I am the humblest of his servitors, his chaplain.

CROMWELL (sharply).

Thou liest with unparalleled effrontery! Thou, my chaplain!

LORD ROCHESTER (dismayed).

(Aside.)

God! 't is Cromwell! what do I hear? 't is Cromwell! We have a traitor in our ranks!

CROMWELL.

Thou brazen-faced impostor! thou shouldst grovel in the dust here at my feet!

LORD ROCHESTER.

My lord, I pray you pardon me,—Your Highness!

(Aside.)

What the devil do they call him, Highness or your Grace?

(Aloud.)

Forgive me, pray. The error into which I strayed arose from too hot zeal against your enemies. Words indistinctly heard . . .

CROMWELL.

But why this lie?

LORD ROCHESTER.

I hoped to realize a dream born of my devotion to your fortunes. I dare to crave the post of chaplain in your household.

CROMWELL.

Art thou a professor of the true faith? What is thy name?

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Deuce take my cursed memory! What is my name in this my saintly role?

(Aloud.)

I am unknown to fame . . .

CROMWELL.

Thy name? The purest water gushes from the bottom of the well.

(Rochester in the midst of his embarrassment seems suddenly to remember something of importance. He feels hurriedly in his pocket, takes therefrom a letter, and hands it to Cromwell with a low bow.)

LORD ROCHESTER.

This note will tell you who I am, my lord.

CROMWELL (taking the letter).

From whom?

LORD ROCHESTER.

From Master Milton.

CROMWELL (opening the letter).

A very worthy man! Blind, more 's the pity.

(He reads a few lines.)

So thy name is Obededom?

LORD ROCHESTER (bowing).

My lord has said it.

(Aside.)

God in heaven! what a name! Ob—Obededom! Ah! Davenant, thou scurvy knave, to give me such a name—a name to make the devil run away! a name that cannot be pronounced without a frightful grimace!

CROMWELL.

'T is a saintly name you bear! Obededom of Geth received within his house the ark upon its travels. Friend, be worthy of that memorable name!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Here goes for Obededom!

CROMWELL.

Milton, a saint of much consideration, Clerk of the Council, is your guaranty.

(Aside.)

In very truth, he seems devotedly attached to me; his very passion was a proof of it.

(Aloud.)

But 't is my duty and my purpose to submit you to the test, to question you concerning divers points of doctrine, ere I do appoint you chaplain to my household.

LORD ROCHESTER.

So be it.

(Aside.)

The crisis is at hand.

CROMWELL.

Hark ye. In what month did Solomon begin his temple?

LORD ROCHESTER.

In Zio, the second of the sacred year.

CROMWELL.

And when did he complete it?

LORD ROCHESTER.

In the month of Bul.

CROMWELL.

Had Thares not three sons? and where?

LORD ROCHESTER.

In Ur, in Chaldea.

CROMWELL.

Who will replenish the exhausted earth?

LORD ROCHESTER.

The saints, whose reign will last a thousand years.

CROMWELL.

By whom are best performed the holy offices?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Each true believer hath within himself sufficient grace. For such an one to preach he needs but to ascend the pulpit, and to have learned, by drinking at the springs of Carmel, to say *Aleph*, *Beth* and *Ghimel* instead of A, B, C.

CROMWELL.

Well said. Continue. Give your thoughts free play!

LORD ROCHESTER (with enthusiasm).

The Lord in spirit doth reveal himself to every man. One need not be priest, minister or scholar, to have received the ray creative from on high.

(Aside.)

I mean a sunstroke.

(Aloud.)

Without faith mankind doth crawl. But watch, your soul illumine with the lamp of

faith. The soul's a sanctuary, every man a clerk. Bring to the common hearth your warming ray. The prophets preached upon the public squares, and the windows of the Holy Temple were oblique.

(Aside.)

I cheerfully agree that they may hang thee, Obededom Wilmot, if I do understand a single word of what I say!

CROMWELL (aside).

He is an anabaptist. Strong in logic is he, but his doctrine is at bottom very demagogical.

LORD ROCHESTER (continuing, with warmth).

The gift of tongues doth surely come to him who speaketh frequently and at great length.

(Aside.)

I am a living proof that that is so!

(Aloud.)

By musing, praying, keeping vigil, one becomes a Levite. Then, although he travels fast, one may come up with Satan, who, his club-foot notwithstanding, in a single day doth journey from Beth-Labaoth to Beth-Marchaboth.

(Aside.)

Body of God! I'm doing marvelously well. I'll work myself into a frenzy!

CROMWELL.

'T is enough. You build your edifice upon a false foundation; but we'll speak thereon again. What are the impure animals?

LORD ROCHESTER.

All herons, bitterns, ostriches, the larus and the ibis, excluded from the ark.

(Aside.)

The Cromwell . . .

(Aloud.)

And everything that flies or walks. .

CROMWELL.

And which are they whereof man may not eat?

LORD ROCHESTER.

The attacus, my lord, the bruchus, and the ophiomachus.

CROMWELL.

Friend, you forget the locust.

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

Ah! the devil! But who would care to give such beasts as those a lodging in his belly?

CROMWELL.

You do likewise fail to mention this, which it is meet to know: "Who touches a dead body is contaminated and remains impure till evening."

(*Aside.*)

But a fig for that! he's very well informed! upon these matters few can have well-reasoned notions like myself.

(*Aloud.*)

One last word. Is it conformable to Holy Writ to wear long hair or short?

LORD ROCHESTER (*confidently*).

Short, very short!

(*Aside.*)

Thou roundhead, make the most of that!

CROMWELL.

Which leads you to conclude . . . ?

LORD ROCHESTER (*quickly*).

That our hair-dressing is but vanity. 'T was by his beautiful long locks that Absalom was hanged.

CROMWELL.

Aye, but Samson died, when he was shorn.

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside, biting his lips*).

Damnation!

CROMWELL.

On so grave a subject to throw all the light that may be thrown, I will consult my Bible.

(*Exit.*)

SCENE XVI

LORD ROCHESTER (alone).

Go to! I came not badly out of that assault. Though Puritan he be, the rascal is no fool. Indeed, I fear . . . But by Saint-Paul, who is this traitor who enjoys the confidence of Cromwell and of Hyde? Perfidious knave! Nathless, I cozened the old devil! How he doth question you in sermonizing cant! how he doth look you over with his hypocritical old eye!

(Gazing critically at himself.)

'T is fortunate for me that I am most unprepossessing to the sight! I have the

aspect of a downright villain, of a true king-killer! By my faith, he took me for a thief at first, I do believe.

(He laughs.)

This preaching man of war, this patriarchal brigand, to the end that he may never be caught napping, goes about in his own palace, armed to the very teeth with pious riddles and good, honest pistols. Thus he always has at his command two ways of driving you to bay.

(Enters Richard Cromwell.)

SCENE XVII

LORD ROCHESTER, RICHARD CROMWELL.

LORD ROCHESTER (as he spies Richard coming toward him).

How now! 't is Richard Cromwell! I must hie me hence! If he should recognize me, 'ware the cord, or e'en the stake! The learned Obededom would lose all his Hebrew there!

RICHARD CROMWELL (scanning Rochester closely).

Meseems that I have somewhere seen that face.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside, counterfeiting Puritan solemnity).

The bear doth scent the pseudo-corpse.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

I cannot err.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

An evil omen this!

RICHARD CROMWELL (still examining him).

This man is nothing less than he 's a Puritan divine. Amongst our cavaliers this morning he was drinking with the rest. I have a shrewd suspicion who he is. Aha! the villain!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Malediction! Never have I had a more unseasonable meeting since the tête-à-tête, wherein I talked of love to Lady Seymour with her fifty summers!

RICHARD CROMWELL (aside).

How can one be suspicious of a man, with whom one sits and drinks from the same glass?

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Ye gods! what a fierce glance!

RICHARD CROMWELL (aside).

'T is surely some one of my father's spies, come hither to tell evil tales of me. He 'll say that I was drinking at a tavern with enemies outspoken of the powers that be. 'T is in my father's eyes a crime to punish with imprisonment: lèse-majesté! high treason! I must try to win him to my side and thus avert the storm.

(He feels in the pocket of his doublet.)

I have a few gold nobles in my purse . . .

LORD ROCHESTER (aside, noticing his movement).

He doth make ready to attack me. Is he also armed with pistols?

(He moves away in some trepidation.)

RICHARD CROMWELL (aside).

So they are paid, what care such fellows who is paymaster?

(He approaches Rochester with a smiling, free and easy air.)

Good-morrow to you!

LORD ROCHESTER (ill at ease).

Good my lord, may Heaven smile upon you!

(Aside.)

What an infernal smile he fixes on his prey!

(Aloud.)

I am an obscure member of the living church, and I will pray for you.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

I've seen you in another place, however, not at prayer, but swearing lustily.

LORD ROCHESTER (earnestly).

Nay, you mistake, my lord! I, swear!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Aye, by Saint George! and by Saint Paul!

LORD ROCHESTER.

I!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Swear that you swore not.

LORD ROCHESTER.

I!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Look you, reverend sir, be frank upon this point.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

The devil!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

You are not what you do seem to be. Beneath a mask of sanctity, you hide a traitor's eye.

LORD ROCHESTER (in consternation, aside).

Ah! I am lost!

(Aloud.)

My lord!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Is 't true?

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Accursed mischance!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Yes, I know all. But do not you denounce me.

LORD ROCHESTER (in surprise, aside).

What means this? I was about to make the same request of him. What says he?

RICHARD CROMWELL.

I was born of an adventure-seeking humor. I have friends among all classes, and I drank this morning with the cavaliers; and so did you, a Puritan! Wherein will it advantage you to tell my father that his son was drinking with them in that den, and for a drop of wine, which I was loath to drink, make me like to a he-goat driven from the flock?

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

I'm saved!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

I know, my friend, that my good father loves to be apprised of all that one may say or do on all occasions. But did we pass our time in talking of conspiracies? For you, my friend, are one of his paid spies! You see that I know all!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Aye, 'faith, he doth know all in very truth! How monstrous clever am I in my role of saint! I have achieved so faultless a conception of the part that this one takes me for a spy, and that one for a thief!

(Aloud, bowing to the ground.)

Your Grace doth do me too much honor.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Save me from disgrace in my capricious father's sight. Give me your word—I have a goodly store of gold nobles—to say no word of what you saw this morning to the Lord Protector.

LORD ROCHESTER.

That will I, right willingly.

RICHARD CROMWELL (offering him a well-filled purse, embroidered with his arms).

Take you my purse, I am no ingrate.

LORD ROCHESTER (taking it after a moment's hesitation).

(Aside.)

'T is one resource more. When one conspires, one must needs be rich. Moreover, avarice is plainly writ in my disguise.

(Aloud.)

My lord is generous . . .

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Well, take it and go drink !

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Upon my soul, the end of this affair is better than I dared to hope.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

My friend, how much canst thou earn in thy calling—leaving the gallows out of the account?

LORD ROCHESTER.

A minister . . .

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Nay, as a spy?

LORD ROCHESTER.

My lord doth foist a name upon me !

RICHARD CROMWELL.

In thy trade, philosophy 's a prime necessity. Why blush?

LORD ROCHESTER.

My lord !

SCENE XVIII

THE SAME: CROMWELL.

CROMWELL (with a richly bound Bible, ornamented
with his crest, in his hand).

I prithee, Master Obededom, listen to this
verse concerning Dabir, King of Edom . . .

(His eyes fall upon his son.)

Aha !

(To Rochester.)

Begone !

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

What does this mean ? How suddenly he
doth assume his haughty air ! how suddenly
the tyrant doth replace the pedagogue !

(Exit.)

SCENE XIX

RICHARD CROMWELL, CROMWELL.

(Cromwell walks up to his son, folds his arms, and gazes sternly into his face.)

RICHARD CROMWELL (bowing low).

My father—whence, I pray you, this unwonted perturbation? Whence the cloud that overspreads your brow, my lord? On whom is like to fall the storm that it forebodes, whereof the lightning flashes ominously in your eyes? I prithee, what 's the matter? what is wrong with you? what do you fear? What is it that can make you sad amid the universal joy? To-morrow the republic dies and goes to join the phantoms of the former race of kings, bequeathing you three realms; to-morrow will your grandeur rise to grander heights upon the throne; to-morrow will old England's armed champion make proclamation at Westminster of your rights, and, throwing down his gauntlet to your rivals, bid defiance to the world, amid the roar of cannon and the pealing of the bells from every steeple, in the name of Oliver the king. What lack you? London, England, Europe, your own family—to all and everywhere meseems your wish is law. If I might dare to name myself, my father and my lord, I have no thought save for your life, your health, your fortune . . .

CROMWELL (who has not taken his eyes from his face).

My good son, how fares King Charles?

RICHARD CROMWELL (in consternation).

My lord!

CROMWELL.

Another time you would do well to make a better choice of boon companions, sirrah!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Good my lord, may I be cut in pieces, may I be changed to something viler than the dirt beneath my feet, if . . .

CROMWELL (interrupting him).

Do they serve good wine at the *Three Cranes*?

RICHARD CROMWELL (aside).

Th' infernal spy had told him all beforehand!

(Aloud.)

On my soul, my lord . . .

CROMWELL.

You seem confused. Is it a crime for friends of jovial humor to assemble round a jug of muscadine? Of course, my son, you drank to my good health?

RICHARD CROMWELL (aside).

Ah! there 's the rub! the cursed toast I drank to Charles!

(Aloud.)

My lord, our meeting, by the name I bear, was altogether innocent . . .

CROMWELL (in a voice of thunder).

Out, villain! My own son this morning
did with cavaliers in ghastly merry-making
drink his portion of my blood!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Nay, father!

CROMWELL.

Drink with pagans whom I hold in detesta-
tion! Drink to Charles's health! And on a
day of fast!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

My lord, I swear that I knew naught of that.

CROMWELL.

Nay, keep thy swearing for thy Tyrian
king! Do not, before my very eyes, thou
traitor, aggravate thy parricide with blas-
phemy! Thy brain is turned with noxious
wine! 'T was poison thou didst drink to the
king's health. My vengeance silently kept
watch upon thy crime. Although thou art
my son, my victim thou shalt be. The tree
will e'en consume itself with fire, that so its
fruit may be destroyed.

(Exit.)

SCENE XX

RICHARD CROMWELL (alone).

A world of trouble for a paltry glass of wine ! To drink upon a day of fast !—there- by one doth become a sacrilegist, traitor, par- ricide, blasphemer, God knows what ! 'T were better, by my faith, for him who would take	pleasure in his revel, to fast with saints than drink with madmen ! Therein lies a truth my penetrating intellect had not divined before this day. My father is beside himself.
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(Enters Lord Rochester.)

SCENE XXI

RICHARD CROMWELL, LORD ROCHESTER.

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

Methinks that Richard wears a troubled look.

RICHARD CROMWELL (*spying Rochester, as he walks across the back of the stage*).

Ah! 't is my spy! The caitiff had already spoken. I must drive him to his hole like a Scotch fox.

(He walks up to Rochester with a threatening air.)

Thou traitor! once again we meet!

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

How now! a fresh attack! Methought we had made peace.

(*Aloud.*)

What have I done, I prithee, to offend my lord?

RICHARD CROMWELL.

I verily believe the churl doth mock at me! Dost think still to conceal thy perfidy? I have seen my father, villain! he knows all!

(*Observing Rochester's embarrassment.*)

Consider what thou canst reply to me.

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

Damnation! in good sooth someone among us serves as spy to Cromwell. Can he know who I am?

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Methinks he 's laughing in his sleeve!

LORD ROCHESTER.

My lord! . . .

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Thinkst thou that thou wilt twice escape me? All thy treachery 's laid bare at last. My father 's in a frenzy.

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

Yes, I am recognized, beyond a doubt. I needs must face the storm.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Thou coward!

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

I will lay aside the mask, and meet him boldly.

(*Aloud.*)

Since at last you know me, Master Richard Cromwell, for what I am, you well may honor me by meeting me in single combat. Each of us doth owe the other satisfaction. Weapons, place and time—in everything I leave the choice to you. Methinks I am a foeman worthy of your steel.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

What! Richard Cromwell fight a duel with a spy!

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

Still harping on that theme! The insult calms my fears.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Thou, in thy serpent's skin and ministerial gown, dost talk of duels! Dost thou deem thyself less vile, in God's name, than a Jew? Do justice to thyself, thou dog!

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

He's monstrous civil!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

When thou hadst betrayed me stealthily, to take my gold! To grasp with either hand, and sell him who did purchase thee!

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

What does he mean?

RICHARD CROMWELL.

At least give back my money!

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

Satan! I have already sent it to Lord Ormond.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Well! wilt give me back my money, sirrah?

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

What to do?

(*Aloud.*)

'T was but a trifling sum . . .

RICHARD CROMWELL.

So, so! 't was not enough!—i' faith, full dear thou 'lt pay me for that trifling sum upon thy bones, upon thy flesh!

(*He draws his sword.*)

An I have not my money, I will have, by dint of my good sword, what Satan did endow thee with in place of soul!

(*He rushes at Rochester with uplifted sword.*)

My purse! my purse!

LORD ROCHESTER (*retreating*).

By Heaven! he means to murder me! The devil take the purse!

SCENE XXII

THE SAME: the EARL OF CARLISLE, followed by four halberdiers.

(Richard Cromwell pauses in his attack. The Earl of Carlisle bows low to him.)

EARL OF CARLISLE.

My lord Richard Cromwell, in the protector's name, I do demand your sword.

RICHARD CROMWELL (handing him his sword).

'T was busied in inflicting chastisement upon a traitor. You come a thought too soon.

LORD ROCHESTER (in a loud voice, and with an inspired expression).

O happy chance! the Lord doth from Antiochus's hands deliver Eleazar!

EARL OF CARLISLE (to Richard Cromwell).

Your honor will retire to your own apartments. My orders bid me place two archers at the door.

RICHARD CROMWELL (to Rochester).

'T is thou by thy foul treachery dost bring me to this pass!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

My brain is in a whirl. How now! 't is I who cause the son of the protector to be held in durance! and, when threatened by his sword, 't is Cromwell who doth rescue me from his son's wrath! And yet, I seek the father's ruin, and have done nothing to give umbrage to the son.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Wilt thou again insult me with thy empty challenges, thou coward?

(To Lord Carlisle.)

Trust him not, he has two faces. I would not repine, if I could but have paid him as I would have liked for his vile tale-bearing. A double face doth need four buffets.

(Exit Richard Cromwell, surrounded by halberdiers.)

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

'T is a famous thing to wear a roundhead mask!

SCENE XXIII

EARL OF CARLISLE, LORD ROCHESTER, THURLOW.

THURLOW (to Lord Rochester).

My lord, with due appreciation of your eloquence and learning, doth appoint you chaplain to his household. You will read the prayers at morning and at evening; preach to the guards on duty at his door; and ask a blessing on the food that 's set before him, and on the hippocras his Highness drinks at night.

LORD ROCHESTER (bowing, aside).

'T is well! that is our aim.

THURLOW.

Such are your duties.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Rochester at prayer for Cromwell! 't is absurd beyond expression! A young imp of Satan blessing an old devil!

THURLOW (to Lord Carlisle, handing him a parchment).

A foul conspiracy, my lord, will come to light to-morrow at Westminster.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

They do not know all!

THURLOW (still to Carlisle).

Arrest this Rochester.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

First find your man!

THURLOW.

And Ormond.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Warned by me a moment since, he should have changed his name and his abode.

THURLOW.

Touching the others, close watch must be kept on them. They 'll throw themselves into our nets of their own motion.

(Exeunt Thurlow and Carlisle.)

SCENE XXIV

LORD ROCHESTER (alone).

Their plan will be forestalled by our stratagem. This very night will Cromwell be surprised by us. For all goes well. Though half betrayed I will not falter. For our Stuarts and our country, in this role, so hazardous and so ridiculous withal, I will defy sword-thrusts and	pistol-shots, and eke discussions on the Bible. Clad in a fox's pelt among the wolves. I 'll chance it as a saint, as an impromptu chaplain, ready for whatever may befall, cross-questioning or scrimmage; sometimes Ezekiel, sometimes Scaramouche!
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C. Dardas int.

*E. Barden
C. Dardas int.*



ACT THIRD

THE JESTERS

THE PAINTED CHAMBER AT WHITEHALL

At the right a large gilded arm-chair, upon a dais reached by two or three steps covered with the Gobelines tapestry sent by Mazarini. A half-circle of chairs without backs facing the arm-chair. Near by, a large table with a velvet cover, and a folding chair.

SCENE I

CROMWELL'S FOUR JESTERS

TRICK, FIRST JESTER, in a costume of alternate yellow and black stripes, pointed cap of the same, gold bells, the protector's arms worked in gold on his breast; GIRAFFE, SECOND JESTER, red and yellow stripes, cap of the same, with silver bells around the edge, the protector's arms in silver on his breast; GRAMADOCH, THIRD JESTER, and TRAIN-BEARER to his Highness, red and black stripes, square cap of the same, gold bells, the protector's arms in gold on his breast; ELESURU, FOURTH JESTER, costume entirely of black, three-cornered black hat with a silver bell at each corner, the protector's arms in silver. Each of the four wears at his side a small sword, with a huge hilt, and a wooden blade: Trick has a bauble in his hand in addition.

(They come danciog and frolicking upon the stage.)

ELESURU.

(He sings.)

Hark ye, gentles all and dames!
I have trudged about in hell,
Moloch, Lucifer and Baal

Went to toss me in the flames
With their iron pitchforks fell.

The fire caught the clothes I wore,
My doublet blazed up merrily,
When, God be praised, most luckily,
A monkey Satan took me for,
And let me go;—and here am I!

(He hums.)

A monkey Satan took me for . . .

GIRAFFE (gravely).

Dost think that he did let thee go? For whom dost thou take Oliver, our temporal king and spiritual lord?

GRAMADOCH (to Giraffe).

To be a devil, is 't enough to have a pair of horns? If that were so, Giraffe, hell would be limitless.

ELESPURU.

Fie! Dost thou hint at such suspicions touching Dame Elizabeth?

GRAMADOCH.

Hark ye to this. The Frenchmen have produced this ditty:

(He sings.)

Par deux portes, on pent m'en croire,
Les songes viennent à Paris,
Aux amants par celle d'ivoire,
Par celle de corne aux maris.¹

Cromwell doth make me bear his train;
e'en so! his wife doth make him wear her horns.²

TRICK.

'T is infamous, my masters! your foul slanders do deserve the gibbet. I am Dame Elizabeth's leal knight. For Cromwell's honor and for hers I plead. I stand her sponsor fearlessly; she is so ugly!

GRAMADOCII.

True. I lied; deny it I cannot. When one has naught to say, one talks to talk. For my own part I stand in mortal dread of ennui, which would make me ill, and so I'll sing a ballad with an echo.

(He sings.)

Why doth this knave so grave

Rave?

Doth Rose thy love betray?

Aye.

Why art thou on the rampage,

Page?

Art thou Rose's lover also?

So!

What gives thee that air morose,

Rose?

The spouse whom thy heart ne'er welcomes,

Comes.

From the bed where thou 'rt held by love,

My love,

Thou dost see him returning, alas!

Lass.

Thine ear, which his coming fears,

Hears,

Of his steed the echoing trot,

Or ought.

He will surely to punish thy shame

Aim.

Ah! tremble! he comes! 't is he!

See!

Page and lover in vain do try,

Aye,

To fly from the grim stronghold

Old.

He seizes them 'neath the wall

All,

To his slaves give the churls, who implore,

O'er.

His voice doth with loud uproar,

Roar;

—"To death with the dogs straightway

Away!

Toss their bones to the birds of prey,

Pray!

Their charms shall delight the crows,

Rose.

Yawn, the guilty wretch to entomb,

Tomb!

And thou, fiend, who at husbands dost sneer,

Sneer!"

When her spouse, upon leaving her side,

Sighed,

And to God did his love entrust

In trust,

No languishing lover, soft-eyed,

Eyed

Her, with glances that, managed with skill,

Kill.

Nor enticed the refractory belle

To rebel;—

But when he returned she 'd a score

Or more.

TRICK (to Gramadoch).

Now listen to my tale :

(He sings.)

Epoch curious !
 Job and Lazarus
 Have gold galore.
 Peloponnesus
 Upon King Cræsus
 Doth alms outpour.
 How fate doth revel !
 Of good and evil,
 Angel and devil,
 The mixture see !
 And damsels fair,
 Who virgins are,
 Or claim to be.
 Beauties facile,
 Husbands docile,
 Witless wittols,
 Whose Lucreces,
 Wanton pieces,
 Make them cuckolds.
 Democritus
 Perfidious,
 And kings jocose ;
 Weeping Niobes
 Leading lives of ease ;
 Jesters morose ;
 The sword and shield
 For cons and pros ;
 Fond lovers' woes
 To philters yield ;
 Beasts of the field,
 And cawing crows ;
 Harlots revealed,
 Cicisbeos.
 Wives adored ;
 Hangmen mild ;
 Nuns undefiled,
 Ill secured ;
 Armyless captains ;
 Priests uncompliant ;
 The pigmies Titans,
 A dwarf each giant !
 Thus our age lives ;
 There 's naught survives
 In this bedevil—
 Ment but th' evil.
 Our realm doth course
 From bad to worse.
 Our great Cæsars
 Lizards be, sirs ;
 Our huge Cyclops
 All are myopes ;
 Our proud Brutuses
 Are Plutuses ;

Every Orpheus
 Is a Morpheus.
 Our Jupiter
 'S a knavish cur.
 In times like these
 We can but grin,
 When Hercules
 Doth sit and spin !
 Some climb, some crawl,
 And our Olympus
 Makes with it all
 A fearful rumpus.

GRAMADOCH.

Thy ditty 's execrable, and the rhyme doth
 overweigh the sense.

ELESPURU.

'T is my turn !

(He sings.)

You, at whom in hell's dark spaces
 Grinning demons make wry faces,
 Seers of Angus and Errol ;
 You, who know the magic rite,
 You, who have at dead of night
 No nightingale except the owl ;
 Naiads, who, 'neath your cascades,
 Have no need of parasol ;
 Sylphs, whose airy cavalcades,
 Mountains brave, and barricades,
 Canter in two leaps, you jades,
 From farthest Thule to St. Paul ;
 Huntsmen damned of the Tyrol,
 With your hounds, of naught afraid,
 Roaming e'er from peak to glade ;
 Priests of Argant ; guards of Roll ;
 Hanging on the gallows all ;
 Who renew your vital flame
 'Neath the kiss of a beldame ;
 Caliban, Macduff, Pistol ;
 Gipsies, doers of all evil,
 In whose train all crimes befall ;
 Say, which is the greater devil,
 Is 't old Nick, or is 't old Noll ?
 Tell me, which is Satan's pet
 Of all the beasts he did beget ?
 The asp he prefers to the marmoset,
 The empiric to the aspic,
 Good old Nick to the empiric,
 And good old Noll to good old Nick !
 Old Nick is Satan's left eye,
 Old Noll 's his eye on the right ;
 Old Nick doth cozen deftly,
 But old Noll 's no witless wight ;
 And Beelzebub in his flight doth call
 On old Nick and on old Noll.

When the pair abroad do ride,
 With his scythe Death stalks beside;
 Hell doth furnish the relay;
 Both of them without delay
 Mount upon their chargers' backs;
 Nick on a broom-stick rides away,
 Noll on the handle of an axe.
 To conclude this roundelay,—
 Ere the villain turns recluse,
 To award him his just dues,
 May I see old Noll the cynic
 Carried off by the old Nick!
 Or see, so swiftly fate pursues,
 To wring his neck, and end it all,
 Old Nick call upon old Noll!

(The jesters applaud with roars of laughter, and repeat in chorus.)

Or see, so swiftly fate pursues,
 To wring his neck, and end it all,
 Old Nick call upon old Noll!

TRICK.

D' ye know, my friends, that many a strange thing is passing here to furnish texts for our roundelays?

GIRAFFE.

Yes, Cromwell seeks the kingship. Satan would be God.

GRAMADOCH.

'T is said that two conspiracies have blocked his game.

ELESPURU.

The army's malcontent, the people murmur.

TRICK.

Woe to the apostate if he lays aside his armor for the royal robe! His heart uncuirassed leaves the road more open for th' avenging dagger.

GIRAFFE.

As for me, I revel in the hurly-burly. I will incite the dogs and wolves to feed on one another. Fain would I see the devil place in Cromwell's hands, upon a magnified grid-iron, a sceptre heated red in flames of hell, make of the cavaliers his unclean steeds, and play at bowls with roundheads!

TRICK.

Brothers, what say you to the new chaplain, who doth ask a blessing on us with so mischievous an eye?

ELESPURU.

Hum!

GIRAFFE.

'Sdeath!

GRAMADOCH.

The devil!

TRICK.

Even so! I see that we are of one mind in his regard.

GRAMADOCH.

Friends, let me tell you this:

(They form a group around Gramadoch.)

Dear Obededom! While shooting in the park, I saw him prowling round about the gate, conversing with the guards on duty there, pretending to be preaching to them on some edifying text; he gave them drink, and then he gave them gold, and lastly, as they all were grouped about him, did he say: "Until to-night; to gain admission to the palace, the countersign will be 'Cologne and Whitehall.'"

GIRAFFE (clapping his hands joyously).

He is one of Charles's spies!

ELESPURU.

Say rather Cromwell's! if we may put faith in what our master's son, imprisoned on the tales the traitor told of him, did vomit forth against him in his bitter wrath.

GIRAFFE (laughing).

Aye, true! 'T is said that Richard, who will presently be hanged, did seek to slay his father! By my halidome, 't is most amusing!

TRICK.

I have something even more preposterous than that.

GRAMADOCH.

In very truth?

GIRAFFE.

Nay, Master Trick, that cannot be!

TRICK (exhibiting a roll of parchment, tied with a red ribbon).

See this.

ELESPURU.

What is it, pray?

TRICK.

This parchment fell into my hands from the good doctor's pocket.

GRAMADOCH.

Bah! 't is some old sermon, grim and direful, beginning about *hell* and ending with *the devil*. Give it me. Let us digest it without loss of time. For every jester zealously should study at its source the jargon puritanical.

(He unties the parchment.)

Is he less fool than we, this sour-visaged almoner? He binds his thunderbolts with a red ribbon!

(He casts a glance at the parchment, and roars with laughter; Giraffe takes it from him, and laughs even more heartily; Elespuru, to whom he passes it, follows his example, and Trick, as he sees them all laughing, laughs more loudly than any of them.)

This sermon was dictated by a gamesome imp!

TRICK.

What think you of it?

ELESPURU (reading).

Quatrain to my divinity.

"Divine Egeria! you set my heart ablaze!

GIRAFFE (snatching the paper from him, and reading).

"Your eyes, wherein Dan Cupid lights his conquering fire,

GRAMADOCH (taking the paper in his turn).

"Two gleaming mirrors are . . .

TRICK (taking it from Gramadoch).

"Which concentrate the rays
Of my poor heart's consuming pyre."

(They all laugh more heartily than ever.)

ELESPURU.

What say you? that these verses fell from the pocket of the Puritan?

GIRAFFE.

'The popinjay!

GRAMADOCH (as if struck with a sudden idea).

Aha! I see the game! Aye, so it must be! Brothers, you all do know Dame Guggligoy, the Lady Frances's duenna?

TRICK.

Surely! what of her?

GRAMADOCH.

I saw the chaplain whisper in her ear, and hand a purse to her.

TRICK.

And what said the old dame?

GRAMADOCH.

She said: "To-night, my handsome lad, you 'll be alone with her." Whereat, I sang this song:

(He sings.)

To the pirate said the sorceress:

—"Good captain, in good sooth," said she,

"Your beauty you shall soon possess,

Nor will I a base ingrate be.

But first of all, from out your crew,

Select some pretty sailor, who

My company will not eschew,

Despite my age and gait lymphatic.

Moreover, for my trouble's vail,

Four sheep, each with its fleece and tail,

I 'd have,—the jawbone of a whale,

And four chameleons prismatic,

Some charm, some fetich magical,

Six asps, four skins of the jackal,

And of your men the most asthmatic

To make a skeleton withal."

I' faith Dame Guggligoy doth drive a better bargain for her wares; moreover she hath in

herself a living skeleton. But I conclude by the same token that yonder shorn suborner of soldiers and duennas is here among us not for Charles or Noll, but for my Lady Frances.

ELESPURU.

By my name, my mind is more at sea than ever it has been. What means it all?

GIRAFFE.

I know not; but 't is most amusing.

GRAMADOCH.

Cromwell, who assumes to make the universe accept his yoke, might wisely borrow his four jesters' eyes. Suppose we do enlighten him?

GIRAFFE.

Go to! Enlighten him? Why, Gramadoch, art mad? Is it our business? What are we to Noll? Let us remain in our own sphere. He takes us,—and indeed might pay us better—not to protect his life, but to enliven it. Let them kidnap his daughter, let them force his door; aye, let them shave his head or strangle him, what matters it to us?

GRAMADOCH.

He 's right.

ELESPURU.

Beyond a doubt.

TRICK.

To every man his trade. He reigns, we laugh. Let him be cut in quarters, let him be burned alive, or flayed, naught can he say to us provided we do always have a jest upon our lips.

ELESPURU.

What sweet revenge we 'll take for his disdain, with sneering laughter! How the clowns will mock the king who missed his aim!

GRAMADOCH.

This would-be almoner doth much resemble us. Lovers and fools go always well together. And his name of Obededom seems expressly made to mate with Trick, Elespuru, Giraffe and Gramadoch.

TRICK.

But, friend, if he conspires, we must have an eye to our own welfare. If the Stuart should return, he 'd hang us all.

ELESPURU.

Hang a poor jester for his harmless quips and cranks!

TRICK.

Aye, were it but to see him make wry faces on the gibbet! We should cry in vain for mercy, for 't would be rare sport to see a Merry Andrew dangling by a rope.

GIRAFFE.

Hang us! four innocents! Nay, fear it not. Should Charles return, he must have jesters, too. And we are on the spot. In all the world could he find jesters who have made a deeper study of their art? By instinct some are jesters, we on principle. Go to! a jester always comes forth safe and sound from every cataclysm. To make sure of length of days upon this earth, where all is transitory, one must become a jester; none so wise as he.

TRICK.

In sooth, Cromwell doth weary me! 'T is said that Charles is much more light of heart.

ELESPURU.

I prithee has the tyrant's eagle eye grown weary? We do know what he himself knows not, and hold the thread that he has not yet seen! We, Cromwell's fools!

GRAMADOCIL.

Nay, not well said, Elespuru. We are his jesters; he is our fool. He fancies us his playthings; but, poor man! he 's ours. Are we the dupes of his long, prosy prayers? Are we affrighted by the voice of thunder or the pious wink that causeth kings to tremble? When the hypocrite doth pray, preach or proscribe, can he look in our faces and not laugh? His crafty policy, his deep designs deceive the whole world, save four jesters. And his reign, so fatal to the peoples he assails, when viewed from where we stand is but a senseless comedy, wherein he plays the leading part. Let us look on. We soon shall see a score of actors pass before our eyes, some calm, some sad and some in joyous mood; while we, in shadow, silent, philosophical

observers, do applaud the happy strokes and laugh at the catastrophes; let Charles and Cromwell struggle blindly on and rend each other for our entertainment. We alone, of all, possess the key to this strange riddle. Let us say nothing to the master.

ELESPURU.

'Faith, we 'll let the matter take its course.

GIRAFFE.

Let us keep mum and laugh.

TRICK.

On every side we triumph. Tyrants are made by Satan at the will of jesters. While the whole world doth tremble 'neath the despot's heel, we make our baubles from the despot's sceptre!

SCENE II

THE SAME: CROMWELL, JOHN MILTON, WHITELOCKE, PIERPOINT, THURLOW, LORD ROCHESTER, HANNIBAL SESTHEAD.

(Milton has long white hair; he wears a black coat and black cap, and the chain of Clerk of the Council about his neck; he leans on the arm of a young page in Cromwell's livery.)

CROMWELL.

Ah! here are my four jesters. On my word, the moment is most fit to seek distraction.

(Enters Thurlow.)

THURLOW (to Cromwell).

Parliament, my lord, in the throne-room, doth wait . . .

CROMWELL (testily).

Well, let it wait!

THURLOW (in an undertone to Cromwell).

It is the bearer of the humble address, wherein the people do entreat the lord protector to consent to be their king.

CROMWELL (with beaming face).

And so 't is done!

(Aside.)

What idiots they are!

(To Thurlow.)

I will hear what they have to say, but not until the sitting of my council's at an end: then I must cast a glance at the gray Frisian horses sent to me by Holstein. Do you talk to them, my friend, and fan their ardent zeal. Bid them discuss some text until I come.

GRAMADOCH (in an undertone to Trick).

Out of the Book of Kings, for instance.

(Exit Thurlow.)

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

What do I hear! O Charles! O martyred king! how Oliver doth of himself avenge thee! What a degrading lash succeeds thy glorious sceptre!

CROMWELL (pointing out his jesters to Rochester).

Since we are alone, I fain would laugh a moment. Doctor, these, my fools, I have the honor to present to you.

(Rochester and the jesters bow.)

When we are light of heart, they have a merry wit. We all make verses.

(He points to Milton.)

Even my old Milton needs must take a hand at it.

MILTON (in a vexed tone).

Old Milton, sayest thou? Nay, by your leave, my lord, nine years younger than yourself am I.

CROMWELL.

Well, have it as you will.

MILTON.

But so it is. For you were born, my lord, in ninety-nine, and I in sixteen hundred eight.

CROMWELL.

That savoreth somewhat of ancient history.

MILTON (with some heat).

You surely might entreat me in a more civil fashion! My father was a notary, and in his city alderman.

CROMWELL.

Nay, be not wroth. I know full well, good Milton, that you are a theologian of high repute, and furthermore,—but Heaven doth set limits to its gifts to you,—a tolerable poet, —below the rank of Withers and of Donne!

MILTON (as if speaking to himself).

Below! how cruel is that word! But let us wait, and we shall see if Heaven doth indeed set limits to its gifts! The future is my judge. Aye, it will understand my Eve, descending, like unto a lovely dream, amid the shades of hell; and Adam, culpable, but good at heart; and the archangel, unsubdued, and proud to reign, he too, with undivided power over an eternity that 's all his own; great in his despair, and crafty in his madness, emerging from the fiery lake, o'er which he skims upon his monstrous wings. For in my breast a mighty genius is at work. A vast design I meditate in silence. In his thoughts doth Milton dwell, and there doth find sweet consolation. Yes, I purpose in my turn, audacious rival of the one Supreme Creator, to create a world, 'twixt hell and earth and heaven, by my written words.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

In God's name what is that he says?

IIANNIBAL SESTIHEAD (to the jesters).

Absurd enthusiast!

CROMWELL. (He looks at Milton and shrugs his shoulders.)

Your *Iconoclast* is not to be despised. But as for your great devil, Leviathan regenerate,
(He laughs.)

't is wretched stuff.

MILTON (indignantly, between his teeth).

Forsooth, 't is Cromwell who doth make sport of my Satan!

LORD ROCHESTER (approaching Milton).

Master Milton!

MILTON. (He is still looking at Cromwell and does not hear him.)

Jealousy doth lead him to speak thus!

LORD ROCHESTER (to Milton, who listens absent-mindedly).

You do not understand the art of poetry, 'pon honor, you do not. You have the intellect, but lack good taste. Give ear to this: the French in all things are our masters. Study Racan. Read his *Bergerics*. Let Tircis and Aminte go straying through your fields. Let her bring thither at the end of a blue ribbon her pet lamb. But Eve and Adam! and the fiery lake of hell! 'T is hideous! And Satan nude beneath his red-hot wings! At least, I prithee, let him hide his graceful form beneath some modish garb, a helmet with gold points upon a flowing wig, a doublet of the rosy hue of dawn, a Florence cloak. E'en so do I remember at the Opera, wherewith the court of Paris did of late regale us, to have seen the Sun in holiday attire!

MILTON (astounded).

What means in a saint's mouth this worldly jargon?

LORD ROCHESTER (aside, biting his lips).

One mad blunder more! 'T is fortunate that he did listen with but half an ear; but

Rochester's forever playing tricks upon the sober-minded Obededom.

(Aloud to Milton.)

Nay, I did but jest, my master.

MILTON.

Jesting is pure imbecility!

(Aside, still facing Cromwell.)

How Oliver doth flout me! But, I pray to know, what boots it to be master of all Europe? Childish trifling! Well would I like to see him at the task of writing Latin verses like to mine!

(During this colloquy, Cromwell converses with White-locke and Pierpoint; Hannibal Sesthead with the jesters.)

CROMWELL (abruptly).

A truce to this, my masters! Come! I fain would be amused. You fools! devise some pleasant jest. Sir Hannibal Sesthead . . .

HANNIBAL SESTHEAD (with an injured air).

My lord, your pardon. I am no fool, but cousin to a king, a king of ancient race, and who, without offense, doth reign in Denmark by hereditary right!

CROMWELL (aside, biting his lips).

I understand! He doth insult me! Ah! why must it be that my just wrath can find no way to reach him?

(Sharply to the jesters.)

Come, you varlets, laugh, I say!

THE JESTERS.

Ha! ha!

CROMWELL (aside).

Their laughter, to my ear, hath a mocking sound.

(To the jesters, in a towering rage.)

Be silent!

(The jesters obey. Cromwell continues, indignantly.)

'T is this Milton, this satanic poetaster, who doth set our brains a-whirling with his visions.

(Milton turns upon him, proudly.)

(Aside.)

I must cloak my wrath.

(Aloud.)

What were we saying? Trick, bid them bring beer and pipes.

TRICK.

Aha! my lord would smoke.

(He goes out and immediately returns, followed by two servants with a table laden with jugs and pipes.)

CROMWELL.

I choose to seek a little relaxation from my cares!

(Aside.)

Alas! betrayed by my own son!

(A pause. Cromwell seems to be engrossed by painful thoughts. The others remain silent with downcast eyes. Rochester and the jesters alone seem to remark the protector's gloomy expression. Suddenly, as if he had observed the embarrassed demeanor of his companions, Cromwell emerges from his reverie, and addresses the jesters.)

Know you of any verses since my own in answer to the sonnet Colonel Lilburne wrote?

TRICK.

Nay, Hippocrene is with his urn most miserly. But this . . .

(He offers the protector the roll of parchment.)

CROMWELL.

Read on.

TRICK (unfolding the parchment).

Hum! "*Quatrain.*" 'T is poor trash!
"*To my divinity. Divine Egeria!*"

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Great God! my quatrain!

(He rushes upon Trick, and snatches the parchment from him.)

Malediction! death! damnation! May Heaven pardon me,—

(He bows in Cromwell's direction.)

and you, my lord, if I do swear! But how, I pray you, can I listen coolly, while the licentious torrent overfloweth at my side?

(To Trick, who is laughing uproariously.)

Avaunt, begone, thou Edomite, thou unclean Midianite!

(Aside.)

I do not now recall another rhyme in *ite*! My quatrain! from my pocket did yon devils filch it!

CROMWELL (to Rochester).

I do well conceive that verses like to these would rouse your scorn . . .

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Not so!

CROMWELL.

But here we are within the precincts of no church; I fain would read the lines that scandalize you. Give it me.

LORD ROCHESTER.

What! shameless songs red-hot from hell!

CROMWELL (impatiently).

Nay, give it me, or I will . . .

LORD ROCHESTER.

But, my lord . . .

CROMWELL (imperiously).

Obey!

(Rochester bows and hands the parchment to Cromwell, who casts his eye over it, and returns it.)

These verses are poor stuff!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Poor stuff! my verses! nay, thou liest! Lo! this regicide, this Cromwell doth presume to sit in judgment on my verses!

CROMWELL.

'T is a dull affair, this quatrain!

LORD ROCHESTER (glancing at the parchment).

Good my lord, the authors of such lines as these are surely damned; but in themselves they seem not badly turned.

TRICK (in an undertone, to the other jesters).

'T is past a doubt that he 's the author!

(Aloud.)

Had I capped these rhymes, I know full well Apollo would have held me guilty of a fourfold crime, so wretched are they!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside, looking askance at the jesters).

Aye, laugh on, ye leopard's monkeys, vulture's paroquets!

CROMWELL.

'T is no part of your functions, Doctor Obodedom, to pass judgment on this quatrain, gallant but somniferous.

LORD ROCHESTER (putting the quatrain in his pocket, aside).

'T will surely meet with kindlier appreciation at the hands of Frances.

TRICK (saluting Rochester ironically).

Yes, your worship is too kind to me!

LORD ROCHESTER.

To thee! and how! 't would give me keen delight to drive thee through the length and breadth of London, riding backward on an ass, and scourging thee while God did damn thee!

TRICK.

You would chastise thus the author of the quatrain?

LORD ROCHESTER (confused).

Nay, I do not say . . .

TRICK.

Am I a man to hide his name from you?

LORD ROCHESTER (with increasing anxiety).

'T is well!

TRICK.

I have no purpose to implore his pardon.
He deserves the lash!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Thou villain!

TRICK (aside, to the other jesters, with a laugh).

See! I do embarrass him.

(Enters the Earl of Carlisle.)

Deuce take Lord Carlisle! he will spoil our sport.

LORD ROCHESTER (breathing freely once more).

Ah! ah!

(Cromwell hurriedly draws Lord Carlisle aside to a corner of the stage. All move discreetly apart, but without taking their eyes from Cromwell and Carlisle.)

CROMWELL (in an undertone to Lord Carlisle, who bows respectfully).

Lord Ormond?

LORD CARLISLE.

He has changed his lodging.

CROMWELL.

Rochester?

LORD CARLISLE.

Cannot be found. He is in hiding.

CROMWELL.

Richard?

LORD CARLISLE.

Doth most shamelessly persist in absolute denial. Some admission might be wrested from him by the torture . . .

CROMWELL (sternly).

With your head you 'll answer to me for his every hair! Carlisle, you well do know my horror of all punishments. The torture for my son! 't is well enough for his accomplices. And Lambert?

LORD CARLISLE.

Hath ta'en refuge at his country house, and there, well guarded, tends his flower-beds.

CROMWELL.

What tender care for them! So all escape me. But I have my hand at least upon the crown!

LORD CARLISLE.

Outside Westminster is a mighty crowd, and populace and soldiers there do loudly curse the name of king, that Parliament hath voted to bestow on you.

CROMWELL.

Weigh well your words, my lord!

LORD CARLISLE.

I crave your Highness's pardon.

CROMWELL (aside).

All goes ill.

(Aloud, with indignation.)

Did I not bid you all make merry, gentlemen? I prithee what 's the matter?

(Aside.)

Slaves! they sought to hear what we did say!

(In an undertone, to Carlisle.)

My lord, increase the guard about the palace.

(Exit Carlisle.)

(Aloud.)

Well, what of the quatrain?

(Aside.)

Ah! my wrath doth stifle me!

(Enters Thurlow.)

THURLOW (to Cromwell).

The sect of Ranters, whom the Holy Spirit doth enlighten, would consult my lord touching a point of faith. They are without.

CROMWELL.

Admit them.

(Exit Thurlow.)

(Aside.)

Ah! were I but king by right of birth, I'd have no more of all this riff-raff! But a leader of the people, so that he may guide the common herd, must needs, alas! know how to please them.

(Thurlow returns escorting the Ranters. They are dressed in black, with blue stockings, heavy gray shoes, and broad-brimmed gray hats, on which a small white cross can be distinguished, and which they keep upon their heads.)

THE LEADER OF THE DEPUTATION
(solemnly).

Thou Oliver, in Zion judge and captain of the host, the saints, now sitting here in London in their congregation, knowing that thy learning is an overflowing vessel, by our mouths do ask thee this: should they, who speak not as Saint John spake, but say *Siboleth* instead of *Shibboleth*, be hanged or burned?

CROMWELL (meditating).

The question is most grave and doth deserve mature consideration. To say *Siboleth* is rank idolatry; a crime that merits death, a crime whereat Beelzebub doth smile. But every punishment should have a twofold purpose, which humanity doth in the sufferer's name demand; we must, e'en while inflicting chastisement upon his body, save his soul. Now whether of the two, the cord or stake, is fitter to make peace betwixt a sinner and his God? Fire doth purify him . . .

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

And the cord doth strangle.

CROMWELL.

In the burning triangle was Daniel purified. But so the gibbet has its own advantages. The cross was a gibbet.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

I do much admire in all this how Oliver, as in his own domain, doth nonchalantly pass

from punishment to punishment, sets one aside, takes up another, goes without a stumble from the fagot to the halter, from the gibbet to the stake! How he doth bring to light a thousand hidden graces in them all!

CROMWELL (still meditating).

How difficult to know the truth beyond a peradventure! 'T is a knotty question, aye, I do esteem it of the subtlest and most delicate.

(After a moment's silence, he turns abruptly to Rochester.)

Clerk, speak for us.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

He does as Pilate did.

CROMWELL (to the Ranters, pointing to Rochester).

He is another Cromwell.

LORD ROCHESTER (bowing).

Nay, your Highness flatters me!

THE LEADER OF THE RANTERS (to Rochester).

Should he, who doth commit this grievous sin, be punished with the gibbet or the stake?

LORD ROCHESTER (authoritatively).

The gibbet. May his Amorrean father and Cetean mother perish with him, 'neath the same avenging judgment!

THE LEADER OF THE RANTERS (gravely).

Why the gibbet?

LORD ROCHESTER (with embarrassment).

Ah! the gibbet? For this reason—that the culprit doth ascend the gibbet by a ladder. Even so! And—God did show his faithful shepherd in a dream that so the saved do by a ladder mount to heaven.

(Aside.)

'Faith, I find it hard to keep from laughing in these fellows' faces.

CROMWELL (with a satisfied air).

He 's a learned man in very truth !

THE LEADER OF THE RANTERS (thanking
Rochester with a wave of the hand).

'T is well, we 'll hang them.

(Exeunt the Ranters.)

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

By my head, poor fellows well and quickly
tried are they !

CROMWELL (to Rochester).

I am content with you.

LORD ROCHESTER (with a reverence).

My lord is generous indeed.

GIRAFFE (to the other jesters).

No one of us, my brothers, could have
given judgment more commendably.

(Enters Thurlow.)

THURLOW (to Cromwell).

The Privy Council.

CROMWELL.

Good.

THURLOW.

The purpose of their meeting is . . .

CROMWELL (hastily).

I know. Admit them.

TRICK (in an undertone to the jesters).

Clowns, now let us make way for the wise
men.

(At a gesture from Cromwell, the jesters, Rochester,
and Hannibal Sesthead withdraw ; and two servants
remove the table with the jugs and pipes. Thurlow
introduces the Privy Council, who come forward two
by two, each member taking his place in front of one
of the chairs without backs, while Cromwell ascends
the steps to his great chair of state, and Milton,
gilded by his page, goes to the folding chair by the
table. Whitelocke, Stoupe and Lord Carlisle take
their respective stations about the protector, upon the
steps of the platform.)

SCENE III

CROMWELL; EARL OF WARWICK; LIEUTENANT-GENERAL FLETWOOD, Cromwell's son-in-law; EARL OF CARLISLE; LORD BROGHILL; MAJOR-GENERAL DESBOROUGH, Cromwell's brother-in-law; WHITELOCKE; SIR CHARLES WOLSELEY; WILLIAM LENTHALL; PIERPOINT; THURLOW; STOUPE; MILTON. Each of these dignitaries wears the distinctive costume of his office or military rank.

(Cromwell takes his seat, and puts on his hat. The others also take their seats, but remain uncovered.)

CROMWELL (*aside*).

We needs must listen to the twittering of all these birds. My lords and gentlemen, my privy councilors, ere we begin our session, let us for a moment join in prayer.

(He kneels, and all the councilors follow his example.

After a few moments of silent meditation, the protector rises and resumes his seat; the others do the same. He continues with a heavy sigh.)

My lords and gentlemen,—To govern England, my desert is small! But God on high, made wroth at last by my resistance to his will, doth Parliament inspire to increase my duties and responsibility, by charging me with vastly greater power. Wherefore did I give order to convoke my council, that we might confer together, and take counsel thereupon. First, is it meet to choose a king? And, secondly, should I be chosen? Speak your absolute convictions upon these two points. Let each one in his turn set forth his plan. I speak without reserve—do you the same. The Earl of Warwick bears the greatest name among you. So let him begin. Give ear, Master Milton.

EARL OF WARWICK (*rising*).

Good my lord, your faith, your intellect, your lofty character, are without parallel on

earth; and, further to enhance your eminence, you are akin to Warwick on your mother's side. Your noble 'scutcheon doth the same helm bear. As every kingdom needs must have a king, your Highness is to be preferred to one who might become our master by mere chance. Certes, a Rich may reign as fitly as a Stuart.

(He resumes his seat.)

CROMWELL (*aside*).

His one thought is to exalt his family! Cromwell obscure is nobody; but let him blaze forth on the throne, the Riches are his ancestors, his cousins, his near kin. Yes, they 're my ancestors,—'t will soon be four years since.

(*Aloud.*)

'T is your turn, Fletwood.

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL FLETWOOD (*rising*).

The Republic! my lord and father-in-law, I will set forth my views without disguise. For the Republic was the Stuart's scaffold reared; for it we fought; and we must have it. Let us leave God alone to wear the one true diadem. No Oliver the First, nor Charles the Second! Never a king!

(He resumes his seat.)

CROMWELL.

Fletwood, you are a child! Now, Carlisle, you.

EARL OF CARLISLE (rising).

My lord, your conquering brow was fashioned for the crown.

(He resumes his seat.)

CROMWELL.

Broghill!

LORD BROGHILL.

My lord, I venture to request that I may say to you in private what I have to say.

(Aside.)

This plot of Ormond's doth disturb me beyond measure. What a timid part I play in this exciting drama! Cromwell's counselor, and Charles's confidant! A traitor if I hold my peace, a traitor if I speak!

CROMWELL.

Wherefore in private?

LORD BROGHILL (bowing).

For reasons of importance to the State, my lord.

(Cromwell motions to him to draw near. Stoupe, Thurlow, Whitelocke and Carlisle move away from the protector.)

LORD BROGHILL (in an undertone to Cromwell).

I prithee, might we not negotiate with Charles? Suppose that you should offer him your daughter's hand?

CROMWELL (surprised).

To—the young man?

LORD BROGHILL.

E'en so, my Lady Frances.

CROMWELL.

And his family?

LORD BROGHILL.

Propose that you be crowned king by the name of Oliver. So will you both be king.

CROMWELL.

And January thirtieth?

LORD BROGHILL.

A father you do give to him.

CROMWELL.

Aye, one may give. But how give back?

LORD BROGHILL.

He would forget . . .

CROMWELL (with a scornful laugh).

My crime? he cannot comprehend it. His eye could not discern the end I sought, and by your leave, he's far too great a debauchee! 'T is a mad project, Broghill!

(Lord Broghill returns to his place, and the great functionaries to theirs.)

Speak, Desborough.

MAJOR-GENERAL DESBOROUGH (rising).

My brother, in the darkness you do contemplate a rash design. What! we to undergo anew th' affront of royalty! No king, whoe'er he be! The troops will Cromwell hail with loving acclamations, Oliver with maledictions! Down with courtiers, doctors, systems!

CROMWELL.

Desborough, you fight against a word, against a title. If the guileless people wish a king, why not? What, to a soldier, is this name of king, proscribed by your fantastic pride? A feather in his helmet, nothing more.

(He motions to Whitelocke to speak. Whitelocke rises and Desborough resumes his seat.)

WHITELOCKE (aside, glancing at Desborough).

Yon clodhopper to rise before myself!

(Aloud.)

My lord—whatever may befall, I will speak honestly. No nation without laws, no laws without a monarch. Hark ye; for the argument deserves consideration . . .

(Aside.)

Desborough! a lout! a nobody! take precedence of me!

(Aloud.)

The king was of all time named *legislator*, *latur*, maker, *legis*, of the law; whence I conclude that a prince is to the law what Adam was to Eve. Hence, if the king is of the law the father and the head, once more I say, no nation without kings. For confirmation of my doctrine, see the books of Moses, Aaron and St. John, Glynn, Cicero, and Selden, book the third, the chapter on *Abuses: Quid de his censetur modo codicibus*. My lord, you must be king!—*Dixi*.

(He resumes his seat.)

CROMWELL (congratulating Whitelocke with look and gesture).

How powerfully he doth reason! A most opportune harangue well spiced with Latin! Let us hear what Wolseley has to say.

SIR CHARLES WOLSELEY (rising).

My lord, without evasion I will dare to undeceive your Highness in my turn. The chief of a free people is, so saith the prophet, *tanquam positus in medio*, not at the summit. Whatever be the seat whereon this chief is seated, he is *major singulis—minor universis*. Thus the kingly title doth infringe upon our privilege: *Rex legem violat*.

(He resumes his seat.)

CROMWELL.

Mere schoolboy arguments! I have but slight acquaintance with your Latin phrases. Wretched reasons!

(To Pierpoint.)

You!

PIERPOINT (rising).

My lord, of Israel the mighty bulwark,—Israel, which in thy person dominates the earth,—I have thus much to say: This English nation, whose Parliament doth call itself imperial, enjoys the glorious and immemorial privilege of having for its supreme head a king; its dignity demands it. Deign, your Highness, to accept a title that's distasteful

to you. For you owe it to the people! Yes, my lord, in my opinion you do fail to do your duty to them, if you hold the sceptre without being king.

(He resumes his seat.)

CROMWELL.

And Lenthall?

WILLIAM LENTHALL (rising).

Good my lord, the people, in whose hands the royal power resides, speak by the mouth of Parliament. If then the Parliament doth make you king, you ought, according to the Roman law, according to the Decalogue, to bow to their decree, and reign.

CROMWELL (aside).

The courtier demagogue!

LENTHALL (aside).

He will allow himself to be persuaded; then, I trust, he'll not forget me for the House of Lords.

THURLOW (in an undertone to Cromwell).

My lord, the Parliament doth still await your . . .

CROMWELL (in an undertone, testily).

Hush!

THURLOW (in the same tone).

But 't is . . .

CROMWELL (in the same tone).

Before accepting I must weigh the matter well.

FLETWOOD.

Refuse, my lord! For your sake, for your honor's sake, I dare . . .

CROMWELL (dismissing them all with a wave of his hand).

Go all, and pray, seek counsel from the Lord!

(They withdraw slowly, in procession. Milton, who brings up the rear, pauses at the threshold, lets the others take their leave, and then directs his guide's steps toward Cromwell, who has come down from his platform, and is standing near the front of the stage.)

SCENE IV

CROMWELL, MILTON.

MILTON (aside).

Nay, I can no longer bear it. I must needs lay bare my soul.

(He walks up to Cromwell.)

Look well upon me, Cromwell!

(He folds his arms. Cromwell turns, and gazes at him with a surprised and haughty expression.)

Doubtless thy proud eye already doth enkindle, and thou art aghast to see how boldly I do speak to thee, not having first obtained thy leave? For strange is my position in the council of thy wise men. If among their faces one should seek for mine, some one would say to him: "You see these famous orators, Pierpoint and Warwick and the rest. That dumb man yonder—that is Milton. They have Milton at their board."—"But for what end?" "A dumb man; 't is his rôle." Aye, I alone, whose words the world some day shall hear, am voiceless at the council-board of Cromwell! But to be blind and dumb at once—'t is too much for this time. Thou 'rt lured to thy destruction by the glittering bait of a pernicious diadem. my brother, and I come to plead for thee against thyself. Wouldst thou indeed be king? and in thy heart dost say unto thyself: "'T was for my sake the people won their victory. The end of all their battles, all their prayers, their vigils on the battle-field, their pious labors, all the blood they 've shed, and all the tears they 've wept, the end, in short, of all

the woes they 've suffered, is myself. I reign, and that 's enough. They should esteem themselves most fortunate, that, after so great travail, they have changed their king, renewed their chains." At the mere thought a flush of shame doth overspread my brow. Nay, Cromwell, list; thyself art most concerned. So all the great promoters of our civil war, Vane, Pym, who with a word did cause whole cities to take arms, and Ireton, thy son-in-law, that martyr to our laws, whom thy o'erweening pride dost banish to the sepulchre of kings, and Hollis, Sidney, Martyn, Bradshaw, the stern judge, who read the warrant for his death to Charles of England, and that Hampden, who went down into the tomb so prematurely, all of these did spend their strength for Cromwell, a mere atom in their midst! 'T is thou who dost ordain the exequies of the two camps, and dost despoil the dead upon the battle-field! And so the nation, through these fifteen years of rebellion in thy interest, hath played at liberty for thy advantage! Thou hast looked upon its mighty struggle as a mere business matter, and hast seen naught but a heritage for thee in the king's death! Think not that 't is my purpose here to humble thee; not so. No other than thyself could have eclipsed thee. Mighty in mind, and mighty with the sword, thou wert so great, methought that I had found in thee the man of whom I

dreamed, my hero! Of all Israel I loved thee the best, and no one gave to thee a loftier position in the sky! And lo! for a mere title, for a word as empty as high-sounding, doth the saint, the hero, the apostle do himself dishonor! In his vast designs behold the end he sought,—the purple, a vile rag! the crown, a paltry bauble! Tossed by the tempest to the highest pinnacle, thou wouldst bedeck thy brow with royal splendor, in our eyes a thing that hath forever vanished. Tremble! when one's eyes are dazzled, one is blind. Of Cromwell I do call upon thee, Oliver, to render thy account, and of thy glory, too, which doth become our shame! Old man, what hast thou done with thy young virtue? To thyself thou sayest: "Sweet it is, when one has battled manfully, to sink to sleep upon the throne, surrounded by the servile, doing homage; to be king; to people scores of places with one's likenesses. I have my grand reception when I rise; I go in my fine chariot to be enthroned at Westminster, to pray at Temple Bar; I traverse with my retinue a servile multitude; the city fathers ply me with harangues; the head-piece of my helmet is adorned with flower-work." Ah! Cromwell, is that all? Remember Charles the First. Dar'st thou pick up the crown that lieth in his blood, and with his scaffold build thyself a throne? Thou wouldst be king, O Cromwell? Can it be that thou dost dream of it? Hast thou no fear, that some day, this same Whitehall, where thy grandeur doth display itself, dressed once again in crape, will throw its fatal window open once again? Now thou dost laugh! Pray, hast thou in thy star unbounded faith? Think of Charles Stuart! Remember! aye, remember! When that monarch was to die, and when the axe was ready, a veiled executioner cut off his head. A king, he perished in the face of all

his people, none to bear him aid, nor did he know who took his life. By the same road thou marchest to thy doom, O Cromwell; with a veil thy fortune's face is covered o'er. Beware lest it resemble the masked spectre, who appears upon the scaffold at th' appointed day! a horrible awakening from dreams of pride! The throne can be approached on but one side, O Cromwell; on that side one doth ascend to it, and on the other doth descend into the tomb. Beware, if thou dost don this tattered purple, lest, in this same room, thou seest an assembled court, wherein thou hast no part. For it may be, believe me, that at last, alarmed, and armed with thy old sword 'gainst thy new sceptre, this same people, who do still abide by thy decree, do think less of thy royalty than of thy regicide. Say, dost thou not recoil? Ah! cast afar from thee this actor's sceptre and this royal mask! Be Cromwell still. Maintain the equilibrium of the world. Do thou assume the task of making this free people reign o'er other nations; but reign not o'er it. Preserve its liberty. Oh! how this people in its pride did blush to see thy genius in this Parliament essay to buy a little tyranny for gold! Put to the blush thy base-born flatterers, show thyself great and noble. Conqueror, apostle, legislator, judge, be more than king. Ascend to thy first height. A single word was needed to create the light; be Cromwell once again at Milton's word!

(He throws himself at Cromwell's feet.)

CROMWELL (raising him with a gesture of disdain).

The worthy man doth take upon himself to speak in a strange tone! Look you, Master Milton, interpreter and secretary to the Privy Council, you are too much of the poet. In the ardor of a burst of lyrical enthusiasm, you forgot that I am commonly addressed as "my

lord," or "your Highness." My humility doth shrink from this vain title; but the people, who are the true king, and in whose service I do sacrifice myself, to my extreme regret will have it thus. I am resigned; do you resign yourself as well!

(Milton rises proudly, and exit.)

At bottom, he is right. But he doth harass me. Charles First? But no, thou dost but ill foresee my destiny, for kings like Oliver do meet with no such death as that, my Milton, they may be poniarded, but never tried. I 'll think on it, however. 'T is a sinister alternative!

SCENE V

CROMWELL, LADY FRANCES.

CROMWELL (as Lady Frances enters).

Ah! Frances! One would say that she doth watch my evil moods, and come with beaming face to drive black care away, like a young star that blooms in the dense darkness. Come, my child! angel in human shape, thy instinct always leads thee to my side when I do suffer. I am always happy when I see thee once again. Thy bright and beaming eye, thy pure, sweet voice, possess a charm for me, that gives me back my youth. Come, child! and let thy father at thy side be born again. Of all about me thou alone dost know naught of the vileness of the world. Embrace me. I do love thee before all thy sisters.

LADY FRANCES (embracing him joyously).

Father, is it true, I prithee tell me, that you purpose to restore the throne?

CROMWELL.

Aye, so 't is said.

LADY FRANCES.

O happy day! To you, my lord, will England owe its happiness.

CROMWELL.

It always was my aim.

LADY FRANCES.

O my good lord and father! how overjoyed will your good sister be! At last, after eight years of weary waiting, we are once more to see Charles Stuart!

CROMWELL (amazed).

What!

LADY FRANCES.

How good you are!

CROMWELL.

'T is not a Stuart.

LADY FRANCES (in surprise).

Who then can it be? A Bourbon? But the Bourbons have no claim upon the throne of England.

CROMWELL.

Methinks . . .

LADY FRANCES.

Who dares lay hand upon the hereditary sceptre?

CROMWELL (aside).

How to answer her. My lips are loath to say my name; it seems a crime.

(Aloud.)

My Frances, other times prefer another race. Hast thou not thought, to fill that lofty post . . .

LADY FRANCES.

Of whom, pray?

CROMWELL (mildly).

Of thy father, of Cromwell, for example?

LADY FRANCES (impulsively).

Nay, may Heaven punish me, if I had thought of him!

CROMWELL (*aside*).

Alas!

LADY FRANCES.

My father! I, insult you so! deem you a sacrilegist, perjurer, usurper?

CROMWELL.

Nay, my child; you judge my virtue too indulgently.

LADY FRANCES.

You are endowed with transitory power; 't is one of the misfortunes of the time, whereby you are yourself a sufferer. But you, assume the diadem of the king-martyr! you, join his executioners! you, reign by virtue of his murder! Ah! . . .

CROMWELL.

Knowest thou who caused his death?

LADY FRANCES.

I do not know. Young as I was, and reared in solitude, I suffered from our country's ills, but did not study them.

CROMWELL.

Did no one ever read to thee a list of those who sat in judgment on the king—the judges—the . . .

LADY FRANCES.

What! the regicides?

CROMWELL.

Aye, Frances, regicides.

LADY FRANCES.

No one hath ever told me who those traitors were. I cursed their crime, but I knew not their names. They were not mentioned in the place from whence I came.

CROMWELL.

And did my sister never speak to you of me?

LADY FRANCES.

Dear father! who said that? I learned to love you.

CROMWELL.

Yes, I hope so. But thou hast a bitter hatred for the daring spirits who condemned King Charles?

LADY FRANCES.

May they all be accursed!

CROMWELL.

All?

LADY FRANCES.

All!

CROMWELL (*aside*).

What! stabbed to the heart in my own family! Cursed by my daughter, by my son betrayed!

LADY FRANCES.

May each of them be likened unto Cain, the outcast!

CROMWELL (*aside*).

Unforgiving innocence! 'T is thought that I do go unpunished! But my dearest and my last-born child is ever an inexorable conscience at my side. Her childish purity, her limpid eye, her voice, do make this Cromwell, bugaboo of kings, to tremble. All my strength of will before her innocence doth fade away. Ought I to persevere? Ought I to seize upon the supreme power? Groveling beneath the throne whereon I sit, the world would hold its peace; but what would Frances say? and what would say her glance, as dulcet as her voice, and which doth charm my heart while it doth drive me to despair? Dear child, with what dismay her loving heart would learn that I, her father, am a regicide, and that I dare aspire to be king! I needs must send her back into the country. I must sacrifice my joy to the fulfillment of my destiny, deprive

my last years of her ministrations I so dearly loved. Above all, I must not make sad, must never undeceive the only being who doth love me still without my power, who, alone in the whole world, doth still believe me innocent. O blessed angel! May my destiny ne'er cast a shadow upon hers! I must be king and she know naught of it.

(Aloud.)

Preserve thy purity of heart; I love thee so, my child!

(Exit.)

LADY FRANCES (looking after him).

What can the matter be? A tear was glistening in his eye! Dear father! how he loves me!

(Enter Dame Guggligoy and Rochester.)

SCENE VI

LADY FRANCES, LORD ROCHESTER, DAME GUGGLIGOY.

DAME GUGGLIGOY (at the back of the stage, to Rochester).

Come, she is alone.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

What marvelous attributes the devil hath bestowed upon doubloons! Thanks to their power have I contrived to make a damned duenna and saintly musketeers abate their rigor. The duenna yielded without much ado. At first I thought to find the soldiers, pillars of Mount Tabor, less accessible; but no, as soon as the dragoon apostles saw the glint of gold, their roundheads turned more quickly than the others. Weary are they of this Cromwell, who doth hold them in subjection. I already have sent word to Ormond that to-night the park gate will be opened. Now, for Frances! Ah! my heart is drunken with the thought of her. I have a sovereign secret to ensure success, for I can sow gold crowns and quatrains in profusion! Let me try my luck!

(He walks toward Lady Frances, who does not see him, but seems to be deeply absorbed in thought.)

DAME GUGGLIGOY (looking at a purse which she holds hidden in her hand).

It is a good round sum!

(Aside, glancing at Rochester.)

A pretty fellow, on my word, is this young gentleman! To take on this disguise, defy all risks, for love! At his age men are mad. Alas! to each his turn! Yes, thus would

Amadis of Gaul have done. And yet, should I permit it? Is this, in good sooth, the part that I should play? And then, this gallant knight has not a word for me; money, that 's all.

(She detains Rochester, as he is about to accost Frances.)

(In an undertone.)

One moment, sir!

LORD ROCHESTER (turning his head).

How now!

DAME GUGGLIGOY (leading him aside to the farthest corner of the stage).

One moment!

LORD ROCHESTER.

What 's the matter?

DAME GUGGLIGOY (smiling sweetly upon him).

Have you nothing more to say to me?

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

The purse was heavy, and should serve my ends.

DAME GUGGLIGOY (aside).

If only he do not with his doubloons again humiliate me.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside, feeling in his empty pockets).

'Sdeath! I 've no more money; not a farthing! I must e'en attack her on the side where all old maids are weak, and tickle her old ears with soft words.

(Aloud.)

Ah! who could tire of holding speech with you? Save for the urgent errand that doth bring me hither . . .

DAME GUGGLIGOY (recoiling).

Softly! You do flatter me.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Nay, nay. But, woe is me! time presses.

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

Ah! I see, you have no eyes save for my mistress.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Charming creature! had I to make choice . . .

(Aside.)

Doth she propose to make me moulder here beside her?

DAME GUGGLIGOY (aside).

He has taste. I am well worth a look when I have beautified myself a bit before-hand. In good sooth, I 'm not to be despised when I am dressed in my red petticoat and farthingale, my *lacs d'amour*, my arms encased in my new sleeves, and my two *tonnelets* in place upon my hips!

(Aloud.)

You think . . . ?

LORD ROCHESTER (turning toward Frances).

But suffer me . . .

DAME GUGGLIGOY (detaining him).

Fair sir, remorse doth seize upon me. 'T is my duty to keep watch on my lord's daughter.

LORD ROCHESTER.

In their day, madam, your eyes would have made Galaor unfaithful and Esplandian inconstant.

DAME GUGGLIGOY (still detaining him).

I have been most culpable. Moreover, you may be surprised with her.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Sir Pandarus of Troy would have been proud to wear your colors.

DAME GUGGLIGOY (aside).

How nobly he doth speak!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Are we both fools?

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

I promise you that I have scruples about listening; I feel a thousand shivers running through my veins, that freeze my blood.

(She takes Rochester's hands.)

LORD ROCHESTER.

Your hands are soft as velvet.

(Aside.)

Must I waste on this old beldame, with the skinny claws, all the fine speeches love doth put into one's head? What will remain for Frances?

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

Leave me.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Mars would have left Venus, had he but seen Guggligoy.

DAME GUGGLIGOY (aside).

This is too much! Would not one say that he doth really love me?

(Aloud.)

My one wish is for a husband who would say the same.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

She wants a husband! I should pity the poor fellow! But she seems determined to stay on here to be flattered! The old hag, whose like cannot be found except in Spain, the country of duennas and of mules!

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

You seem to be a man of taste ; pray tell me honestly . . .

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

Again ! my blood is boiling.

DAME GUGGLIGOY (*pointing to Frances*).

Wherein lies the charm of such young giddy-heads ?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Why . . .

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

What is there in them to stir your passions ? What attraction see you in the manner of such doll-faced chits ?

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

Upon my soul ! with her complexion like a Chinese mandarin's !

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

They have their youth, 't is true ; but after all that means no more than that they have the beauty of the devil.

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

Aye, and thou his ugliness. Damnation ! what course to pursue, O Heaven, to be rid of her ?

(*Aloud.*)

Allow me to have speech of Frances for two seconds. After that, my lovely rose-bud, by my faith as belted knight, I 'll give you something, yes, I 'll give you something—you do not suspect.

(*Aside.*)

A cell in Bedlam !

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

Be it so. I will remain at hand.

LORD ROCHESTER (*drawing a long breath*).

At last !

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

Pray, be discreet. Above all things, whatever happens, never call my name ; they 'd burn me at the stake.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Nay, have no fear. Go walk about a bit.

(*Aside, looking after her as she goes off.*)

Certes, her bones are dry enough to make a merry blaze !

SCENE VII

LADY FRANCES, LORD ROCHESTER.

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

I am rid of her at last. Now let me risk the chance!

(With his eyes riveted upon Frances, who still stands in the same spot, lost in thought.)

What grace and loveliness! celestial creature! Let us take a turn about the citadel, before attacking it. A maiden is a fortress, I have had occasion to observe. The winks that one bestows on her, the modish garb, the trivial attentions, and the gallant speeches, are the trenches which advance in zigzag paths toward the walls; the declaration is the assault; the quatrain—the capitulation. Here I cannot follow all the ordinary rules; and so I will cut short all these preliminaries.

(He walks toward Frances.)

(*Aloud*, bowing.)

Miss—my lady!

LADY FRANCES (*turning*, with an air of amazement).

Sir?

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

Her glance doth strike one dumb.

LADY FRANCES (*with a smile*).

Ah! 't is the chaplain!

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

Curses on these damned canonicals! In vain do I assume the most coquettish air imaginable. She doth see in me naught but a prosing roundhead!

LADY FRANCES.

Holy man, give me thy blessing. On what text will you hold forth to me?

LORD ROCHESTER.

The Passion.

LADY FRANCES.

Deeply doth the zeal wherewith you are inspired touch my heart. You see before your eyes, my father, an unworthy sinner.

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

Ah! her father! is there naught in my appearance to arouse suspicion?

(*Aloud*.)

Give ear, my child.

LADY FRANCES.

I listen with respect.

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

Am I so unblest as to have an air respectable?

(*Aloud*.)

My daughter! list to me. It is not kind to cause such dire distress where 'er you go!

LADY FRANCES (*in amazement*).

Who? I?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Your every glance doth make a hundred wretched.

LADY FRANCES.

Nay, you err!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Oh, no!

LADY FRANCES.

Wherein, I prithee, have I sinned?

LORD ROCHESTER.

You have one of your victims now before your eyes.

LADY FRANCES.

Yourself? what have I done to you? If I have done you wrong, I fly to beg my father . . .

LORD ROCHESTER (detaining her).

Nay, be not remorseful. Of the woes you cause you are quite innocent.

LADY FRANCES.

I do not understand you.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Fascinating guilelessness!

LADY FRANCES.

But, if unwittingly I've done you wrong, I fain would make amends.

LORD ROCHESTER (putting his hand upon his heart).

Ah me!

LADY FRANCES.

Indeed, it is my duty.

LORD ROCHESTER.

What do I hear? You will be exorable to my passion? Ah! you overwhelm me with delight, adorable princess!

(He tries to press Frances's hand, but she draws back.)

LADY FRANCES.

I am no princess. God alone do men adore. You terrify me!

(She attempts to withdraw.)

LORD ROCHESTER (holding her back by her dress).

Frances, do not, I pray thee, thus take leave of me!

LADY FRANCES.

He calls me "thee!"

(Walking up to Rochester with an air of compassion.)

I wonder if his brain's a little touched?

LORD ROCHESTER.

No, but his heart.

LADY FRANCES.

Poor man!

LORD ROCHESTER.

'T is time to try the escalade. She seems to pity me, and love's not far away.

(Aloud.)

Ah! give me back my life.

LADY FRANCES.

Yes, you have need of a physician. In good sooth, he has the fever!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Well-nigh four long years have I your footsteps haunted . . .

(Aside.)

Let us lie a bit; 't will do no harm!

LADY FRANCES.

What do you wish?

LORD ROCHESTER.

To die! Your eyes, which made the wound, alone can work the cure.

LADY FRANCES (moving away from him).

In very truth he terrifies me!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

That doth flatter me!

(Aloud, clasping his hands supplicatingly.)

My queen! my all in all! my deity! my nymph! my siren!

LADY FRANCES (dismayed).

What are all these names? My name is Frances.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Princess! I do burn and freeze at once with love for you! In this disguise love guides me to your side; I am a knight, and not a druid. Woe is me that I have not to offer you the sceptre of the Hindoos! Can it be that you, with your soft eyes, will be as pitiless to such an ardent passion, that for twelve long years has endured, as was the priestess Ophis to King Tiridates? I would have traversed Asia at the call of your entrancing voice. Ah! cruel one! you fly and do not answer me. The love which doth oppress my heart will be my death. But no, say but one word, my charming tigress, but one word, and you will be the most celestial object of your thrice-blessed slave's most faithful love!

LADY FRANCES (in open-mouthed amazement).

What does he say, in Heaven's name?

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

'T is well. She dwells upon my words in ecstasy. And well she may! for my harangue is taken almost word for word from *Ibrahim* or *Bassa the Illustrious*, wherein the Turk Lysander thus apostrophizes Zulmis. 'T is unadulterated Scudéri! I will pursue the theme.

(Aloud.)

Ingrate!

(Detaining Frances, who still manifests her purpose to leave him.)

Remain, or I will drown myself in the Euphrates!

LADY FRANCES (laughing).

The Euphrates!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Or rather, carry out your purpose. Take this sword and run me through with it!

(He puts his hand to his side as if seeking his sword.)

(Aside.)

No sword! ah! how can one in such a costume feign to kill one's self, as is the custom? How pursue one's love-making? But, in default of sword, why not the quatrain? Excellent! God's curse be on me if I move her not!

(Aloud.)

Divine Egeria, give ear to your slave!

(He presents her with a roll of parchment tied with a red ribbon.)

This parchment will depict my heart to you; it would ere this have been destroyed by water or by flame, had not my inner fire dried my tears, had not my tears in turn put out my flame! Take, read, and judge you of my ardent love!

(He throws himself at Lady Frances's feet.)

LADY FRANCES (throwing the parchment on the floor, and recoiling with dignity).

I understand you, sir. You are most insolent. You dare in this guise introduce yourself beneath my father's roof!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

The little one is not so easily beguiled.

LADY FRANCES.

Rise, or I call!

LORD ROCHESTER (still on his knees).

Nay! at your feet I bide!

LADY FRANCES.

Your shameless speeches should be expiated all too soon, if . . .

SCENE VIII

THE SAME: CROMWELL.

CROMWELL (*perceiving Rochester at Frances's feet*).

How now, my master, by what chance, I
prithce, at my daughter's feet?

LORD ROCHESTER (*in dire dismay, but without
changing his position, aside*).

Great God! 'T is Cromwell! I'm a dead
man! To be hanged for a mere peccadillo
is a grievous thing! Caught in the very act!
No punishment will be too great for me!

CROMWELL.

Well done, my chaplain!

LADY FRANCES (*aside*).

We must be indulgent. He is mad!

CROMWELL (*to the terror-stricken Rochester*).

You reckoned not upon my vengeance!

LADY FRANCES (*aside*).

Poor, misguided wretch! my father would
think naught of killing him.

CROMWELL.

The knave! he dares to cast his eyes upon
my daughter! And my Eve was list'ning to
his viper's tongue! What! Frances! you
allow . . . ?

LADY FRANCES (*embarrassed*).

Forgive me, father; 't was not of myself
that he did speak to me.

CROMWELL.

Of whom, then, did he speak to you upon
his knees, I pray to know?

LADY FRANCES.

He did implore my aid to gain his heart's
desire; he asked me for the hand of one of
my tire-women.

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside, rising with an air of
profound astonishment*).

What is that she says?

CROMWELL.

Whose hand?

LADY FRANCES (*smiling*).

Dame Guggligoy's.

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

Ah! traitress!

CROMWELL (*more mildly*).

That 's another matter.

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

'Sdeath! the duenna or the gallows! God
grant that in this dire strait the hag do leave
me free at least to choose!

CROMWELL (*to Rochester*).

Why not speak out at once, my friend?
Since thou dost still retain a fondness for the
flesh . . .

LORD ROCHESTER (*aside*).

The flesh, forsooth! a skin drawn tight
around a bag of bones of true duenna shape!

CROMWELL.

You shall be gratified. I hate to have men
fear me. I am well content with you, and
you shall have your fair.

LORD ROCHESTER.

My fair! a damned old ghost! a body to disgust the beasts of prey! a face to make a sorceress miscarry!

CROMWELL (*aside*).

I did think at first that he had better taste.

(*Aloud.*)

Yes, I consent that you may marry her.

LORD ROCHESTER (*bowing*).

My lord is too indulgent!

CROMWELL.

All your wishes shall be gratified.

(*Enters Dame Guggligoy.*)

SCENE IX

THE SAME: DAME GUGGLIGOV.

DAME GUGGLIGOV (dismayed, aside).

The father and our lovers cheek by jowl!
Ah! all is lost.

CROMWELL (perceiving Dame Guggligov).

'T is you, good dame!

DAME GUGGLIGOV (aside).

I tremble.

CROMWELL.

You are wanted here.

DAME GUGGLIGOV (abashed).

What! I, my lord?

CROMWELL.

You knew the chaplain's love?

DAME GUGGLIGOV (aside).

Great God!

CROMWELL.

And you approved of it?

DAME GUGGLIGOV.

I knew of it? And I approved of it? My
lord, I swear . . .

(Aside.)

So he 's betrayed me! Ah! the perjured
wretch! 'T is plain to see from his dismayed
expression that some . . .

CROMWELL.

I know all.

DAME GUGGLIGOV (aside).

So I had guessed.

(A pause. Dame Guggligov stands as if turned to stone.
Frances, with smiling face, watches Rochester, who
looks in a disconcerted way from her to the duenna.)

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Ah me! an unforeseen transition, and a
cruel!

DAME GUGGLIGOV (throwing herself at Cromwell's feet).

Mercy, my lord! I cry you mercy!

CROMWELL (turning away).

She doth play the prude!

(He motions to her to rise.)

Good Master Obededom here is of our
stanchest friends, and he hath nothing in his
heart that may not well be there.

DAME GUGGLIGOV.

He may aspire to the hand of her he loves?

CROMWELL.

Whom doth he love who is so far above
him, prithee? You!

DAME GUGGLIGOV.

Me?

CROMWELL.

Yourself. Ask him the question.

(To Rochester.)

Is it not true? Speak.

LORD ROCHESTER (confused).

I agree . . .

DAME GUGGLIGOV.

Is it for me you burn, in very truth?

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Aye, were I hell!

(Aloud.)

Madame . . .

CROMWELL.

How now, my master! Let your love appear in all its ardor. It my sanction has. Pray tell Dame Guggligoy that you upon your knees did ask my daughter for her hand.

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

My hand!

(To Rochester, aghast.)

Was it for that? Why, 't is a most outrageous thing! Without my sanction!

LORD ROCHESTER (with a reproachful glance at Frances, who is greatly amused).

Doubtless, I have sinned beyond forgiveness!

(To Dame Guggligoy.)

Madame!

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

Impertinent! Beware my wrath!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

With her gray hair, forsooth, which once was red!

DAME GUGGLIGOY (aside).

In truth, he is a charming fellow!

(Aloud.)

So, my little insolent, you love me?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Say you nay I cannot.

(Aside.)

O Wilmot, how thy plight would entertain the king, between my Lady Seymour and Dame Guggligoy!

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

You love me?

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Ah! if only Cromwell could not hear us! But, under pain of death, I must find tender words to say.

(Aloud.)

I love you.

DAME GUGGLIGOY (coyly).

'T is too much!

LORD ROCHESTER.

I do agree to that.

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

And you would marry me!

LORD ROCHESTER (biting his lips, aside).

Ah! there 's the rub!

(Aloud, with embarrassment.)

I do not say . . .

DAME GUGGLIGOY (incensed at his hesitation).

Consider that the honor—what an insult! Shameless lust!

CROMWELL (to Rochester).

Come, come, console her. You did choose her for your wife!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Damnation!

(Aloud.)

Deign . . .

(Aside.)

Old bag of leather, tanned in witches' revels!

DAME GUGGLIGOY (sighing and looking down).

I consent.

(She offers him a black hand, which he takes with a disgusted air.)

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

And I consent with a bad grace!

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

I 'm not unkind, the saucy knave may kiss me.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

'T is a blessed boon! I choose the gallows and my pardon!

(Dame Guggligoy presents her cheek, upon which he resigns himself to deposit a wry face and a kiss.)

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

You may kiss the other cheek as well.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Ah! thanks!

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

How now! you sulk?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Oh no!

CROMWELL.

No scandal here! You must be married. Come, we 'll finish the affair at once. Your happiness is not of those that are deferred: you both shall be made happy on the spot.

LORD ROCHESTER.

But . . .

CROMWELL.

Love brooks not delay, I know. 'T is very touching! Ho! without there!

(Enter three musketeers.)

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Who would think that 't is my wedding day?

CROMWELL (to the chief of the musketeers).

Go bid Cham Biblechan, one of the Scotch prophets, to join in marriage presently, upon the Book of Faith, Dame Guggligoy and Master Obededom.

(To Rochester and Dame Guggligoy.)

Follow them.

(To Rochester.)

Cham is an anabaptist like yourself.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside, indignantly, as he bows).

A charming compliment!

CROMWELL.

I know you for a dogmatist.

LADY FRANCES (smiling, and eyeing Rochester askance as he salutes her).

How prettily he 's caught in his own trap!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

A scurvy trick hath this same Frances played upon me! Even so, I love her for it. I adore this mixture of chicane and innocence; of childish mischief and angelic kindness. To save me from her father! marry me to her duenna! find a way, while saving me, to punish me!

DAME GUGGLIGOY (to Rochester).

Pray come, my love! You do not stir.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside, with a sigh).

I must e'en bear this sibyl company into the hell of Hymen!

(Exit with Dame Guggligoy and the musketeers.)

CROMWELL (to Lady Frances).

I must leave you now. I go to hear a sermon by our Lockyer, upon Rome and the priests of Ammon.

(Exit.)

SCENE X

LADY FRANCES (alone).

My poor knight did cut a sorry figure. It may be the punishment was somewhat harsh. To marry thus in haste, without well knowing why, and turn his tender glances on Dame Guggligoy! It was ill done of me, and I repent of it. But could I have done otherwise? Certes, my father would have been yet more severe.

(Her eyes fall upon the roll of parchment which is still lying on the floor.)

Ah! 't is his paper—what could he have written me? I will not read it.

(She eyes the parchment with curiosity.)

Nay, but should I show no mercy? no forgiveness? Suppose that I should read it? where 's the harm? I can at once replace it so that he . . . I owe it him to read it, for his punishment is harsh enough!

(She pounces upon the parchment, unties the ribbon, and unrolls it, then checks herself.)

Ought I to read it? is it wrong? But no, for all is over. Let me read.

(She reads.)

"My lord." My lord! what a strange man! He called me princess, nymph, beloved object, angel, queen; and now it is "My lord!" He 's mad!

(She reads on.)

"All goes well!" He writes as he doth speak, incomprehensibly. "All goes well!" What? Let me read on.

(Reading.)

"To-night, upon the stroke of twelve, present yourself at the park gate." He loves me: did he purpose to abduct me?

(Reading.)

"The guard are all won over." That was his plan. The malapert was fearful of detection!

(Reading.)

"The countersign is giv'n. Success is sure." He 's far too modest!

(Reading.)

"You will say to them COLOGNE: they will make answer with the rest of it . . ." That 's not so clear.

(Reading.)

"Thanks to their friendly aid, you will be able . . .

(At this point her voice takes on an accent of terror.)

"To lay hands on Cromwell, sleeping soundly by my agency. THE DEVIL'S CHAPLAIN."—What is this I read? The bandage falls from my affrighted eyes. The miscreant's designs were aimed at no one but my father!

(Examining the paper carefully.)

Here is the address: "To Bloum, at the Rat Hotel, Strand." The traitor handed me this letter by mistake. I go at once to warn my father. Hellish enterprise! See, someone comes, I must make haste. Mayhap 't is the assassin.

(She rushes off the stage, carrying the parchment with her.)

SCENE XI

DAVENANT: afterward LORD ROCHESTER.

DAVENANT (alone).

The protector sent for me ;—with what design ? Bah ! nothing to disquiet me ! pure curiosity !

(Enters Rochester.)

DAVENANT (as he catches sight of Rochester).

But who is yonder bigot ? God ! a charming face ! Is he a saint ? Some shrieking Puritan ?

LORD ROCHESTER (aside, not seeing Davenant).

'T is done ! and here am I a Benedick !

(He walks toward the front of the stage, and recognizes Davenant.)

What ! Davenant !

DAVENANT (aside).

He knows my name !

(Aloud.)

Good sir—But no, methinks I recognize him. 'T is Lord Rochester !

LORD ROCHESTER.

Hush !

(They shake hands.)

DAVENANT.

You do show the master-hand in your disguise. Were you a married man, your wife, upon my word, would never recognize you thus !

LORD ROCHESTER (aside, with a sigh).

Please God !

(Aloud.)

A truce to jesting, Davenant.

DAVENANT.

'T is the first time I have known your lordship to need urging to make sport of husbands.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Can one laugh and marry in the same breath ? I would much like to see him do it !

(Aloud.)

Let 's have done with this. Dear poet, by what chance beneath our roof ? To see you here doth much disquiet me.

DAVENANT (laughing).

Beneath our roof ! I' faith you make yourself at home ! My lord hath speedily become domesticated in this hell. Be not afraid for me. 'T is Cromwell's custom thus to summon me when I return from traveling. How do you stand with him ?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Oh ! not so ill. By Milton's favor, Cromwell doth look kindly on me, and doth shower favors on me, such as they are.

(Aside.)

Indeed, I could have gone without the last.

(Aloud.)

However, as you know, I came in time. A traitor in our ranks, some lurking spy, did the whole plot disclose to him ; but, thanks to my unrivaled cleverness, Ormond 's in hiding in the Strand, and I in Cromwell's very household.

DAVENANT.

Dastard spy ! Willis would have him flayed alive ! 'T is he whom we have put upon his track.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Most luckily the counterminc is all prepared.

(Pointing to his waistcoat.)

I have your phial here. To-night 't will all be over.

DAVENANT.

Cromwell has no suspicion of our daring scheme ?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Not he. There were but three of us who did devise it.

DAVENANT.

Is the guard bribed ?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Yes.

DAVENANT.

'T was no easy matter.

LORD ROCHESTER.

The Puritan conceit is dying out ; gold makes a saint amenable to reason.

DAVENANT.

Noll has no suspicion touching me, you think ?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Nay. You would be arrested if he had your name.

SCENE XII

DAVENANT, LORD ROCHESTER, DAME GUGGLIGOY.

DAME GUGGLIGOY (to Rochester).

Well, sirrah? Already do you fly from your beloved?

DAVENANT (recoiling).

Whom has she designs upon, in Heaven's name?

DAME GUGGLIGOY (to Rochester).

Alas! I weep and wail, I call, I pine away, I utter lamentations fit to break one's heart, I die, and you come not! Ah! poor abandoned me! How now! already has your passion spent itself? Behold my tears! My heart doth melt away in water.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside, turning his head away).

What a fearful grimace! Is she sad in truth, or is it mere buffoonery?

(In an undertone to Davenant, pointing to Dame Guggligoy.)

What do you say to her?

DAVENANT (in the same tone).

Who is this ghost?

LORD ROCHESTER (still in the same tone).

My wife.

DAVENANT (laughing).

Your wife?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Upon my honor, yes! Quick, an epithalamium, poet!

DAVENANT.

My lord is pleased to jest.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Not so, by Heaven! Naught could be less laughable.

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

Out, traitor! Where are your burning oaths?

DAVENANT.

The lady in her way is not uninteresting, on my word. I wish you joy of your good fortune.

LORD ROCHESTER.

My good fortune! She 's my wife, and nothing more! You do insult me!

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

Woe is me! my tears are thrown away. He listens not to me.

DAVENANT (in an undertone to Rochester).

While she doth rave, explain to me how . . .

LORD ROCHESTER (in an undertone).

Cromwell gives her to me, and a dowry with her; all in kindness.

DAME GUGGLIGOY (pulling him by the sleeve).

My dear husband!

DAVENANT (in an undertone to Rochester, who is trying to shake off Dame Guggligoy).

Prithee, how?

LORD ROCHESTER (in an undertone).

I 'll tell you in good time. Content you for the nonce to know that by good right the hag doth call me by that name. 'T is done.

A guard-house served the purpose of a church; a drum delivered a discourse; and 't was a corporal who tied the knot. I trembled at the close lest martial law should make of the camp-bed our nuptial couch. But by good luck . . . !

DAVENANT (laughing).

For my own part I would have liked right well to see the almoner and the duenna joined in wedlock by a trooper!

LORD ROCHESTER.

So the thing is done in our circle.

DAVENANT.

By my troth! such marriages are well adapted to unravel the entangled plot of a dramatic work. A corporal unites the fair one to her lover: and all 's said.

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

Of what are you two talking there beneath your breath? He shuns me! Must I fall so low, I, who am not so ill to look at, and who have two hundred old Jacobuses in honest gold, and all quite new!

DAVENANT (to Rochester).

Damnation! 't is a match to be preferred to many heiresses! Two hundred gold Jacobuses, and three teeth, almost whole!

DAME GUGGLIGOY (to Rochester).

You were so lavish of your loving words . . .

LORD ROCHESTER (to Davenant).

She dreamed that . . .

(To Dame Guggligoy.)

Leave us in peace. Be damned to you!

(He pushes her away.)

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

These men are all the same, the villains! Loving to their mistresses, and cruel to their wives. Before the wedding cats, and tigers afterward!

(To Rochester.)

What! cruel one! thou 'ldst change our myrtles into cypresses! abandon thy young wife!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Go to! thou old adventuress! Were Satan dead thou shouldst his widow be.

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

What language for a saint!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Egad! I quite forgot!

(Aloud.)

O woman, I have made a vow . . .

(Aside.)

I must assume my idiotic air.

(Aloud.)

Of chastity.

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

What say you?

LORD ROCHESTER (lowering his eyes).

Vainly do you say: "Come, sleep with me!" No cursed lust.

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

What! pitilessly drive me from the marriage bed!

LORD ROCHESTER.

Nay, do you stay there, madame; 'faith 't is all the same to me. Myself alone I wish to drive therefrom.

DAME GUGGLIGOY (in a rage).

Oh! what an outrage! serpent! monster! traitor! asp! Look you, beware my anger!

LORD ROCHESTER (recoiling).

'Ware my eyes! the fairy hath hooked nails.

DAME GUGGLIGOY (weeping).

Since thou hast acquired a husband's rights . . .

LORD ROCHESTER.

God save the mark !

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

What freezing coldness doth succeed thy
ardent flame! Why shun me so? What
demon doth possess thee?

LORD ROCHESTER.

And you ask me that !

DAME GUGGLIGOY.

Come, sit beside me. I do love thee still.

LORD ROCHESTER (running off the stage).

Great God ! what shall I do to-night ?

(Exit.)

DAME GUGGLIGOY (running after him).

Ungrateful !

(Exit.)

DAVENANT (alone, with a shrug).

Wilmot is clean daft. What means this
nonsense? Farce with tragedy combined !

(He walks toward the back of the stage, looking after
them.)

(Enters Cromwell.)

SCENE XIII

DAVENANT, CROMWELL.

CROMWELL (holding Rochester's parchment in his hand).

(He does not see Davenant, and is unseen by him.)

Another trap, wherein I nearly fell! In my own palace 't was their plan to kidnap me. Mayhap they would have triumphed by the very madness of their scheme. But for my daughter, a mere child! the kings had lost their master. Monstrous insolence! to seek to abduct Cromwell, here in the very heart of London, they who dare not meet him in fair fight beneath the open sky! How to anticipate so bold and scatter-brained a scheme, unless one be as mad as they? In vain do I peruse and re-peruse this letter, I do grasp its meaning but imperfectly. 'T is well for me that they are altogether mad. Good lack! to court the daughter while one doth dethrone the father! In his den to spread a net for the old lion, while playing with his whelps beneath his claws! Were they less mad, one might deem them more fatuous. "The Devil's Chaplain!" Ah! thou two-faced knave! So Master Obededom is a saint in naught but grimace. Who is he? a leader of the cursed cavaliers. But who? Wilmot Rochester or Villiers Buckingham? With Frances amorous, with me a good apostle; Wilmot or Villiers, one of the twain he needs must be. My soldiers are seduced! I am no longer loved by them. Ah! we shall see. I have my plan already formed. I much regret,

however, that I know but half the counter-sign; had I the whole of it, I'd make them take the bait more readily. No matter! I await Lord Ormond and his churchmen!

(Davenant returns to the front of the stage, and perceives Cromwell.)

DAVENANT (aside).

'T is Cromwell!

(Aloud, bowing.)

Good my lord!

CROMWELL (as if agreeably surprised).

Aha! you come most opportunely, Master Davenant!

DAVENANT (bowing again).

At your Highness's commands.

CROMWELL (with a smile).

Do you still lodge at the same hostelry? the *Siren*?

DAVENANT.

Yes, my lord.

CROMWELL.

A right good place. How fare you, with God's help?

DAVENANT (bowing).

Quite well.

CROMWELL.

You had a pleasant voyage, I doubt not?

DAVENANT.

Yes, my lord.

(Aside.)

Palaver!

CROMWELL.

Doubtless you had some purpose in your journeying? Business, or mere pleasure?

DAVENANT.

Nay, I traveled for my health.

CROMWELL.

Your health?

(Aside.)

I doubt if 't is the better for your travels.

(Aloud.)

Well it is sometimes to leave one's home, and take the air abroad. What places did you visit?

DAVENANT (with some embarrassment).

Eh!—the north of France . . .

CROMWELL.

Indeed! you went not far from home! 'T is said the borders of the Rhine are very beautiful. Throughout my life I ne'er have laid aside the wish to visit them. Pray did you see them?

DAVENANT (with increasing confusion).

Yes, my lord.

CROMWELL.

I do most heartily congratulate you. Triers, too, you saw, no doubt?—and Frankfort? and Mayence?—Cologne?

DAVENANT (aside).

He terrifies me with his condescension.

(Aloud.)

Yes, my lord.

CROMWELL.

Aha! Cologne! a learned town! the country of Saint Bruno, of Cornelius Agrippa.

DAVENANT (uneasily, aside).

Let us go quickly on.

(Aloud.)

Bremen I saw, and Spa . . .

CROMWELL.

Nay! let us pause a moment at Cologne!

(Aside.)

Well would he like to be at Bremen.

(Aloud.)

What of the university? 't is of what century?

DAVENANT.

The fourteenth.

CROMWELL.

To a cultivated mind, an interesting spot; did you not find it so? You must have seen in passing . . .

DAVENANT (aside).

Heaven! can he know?

(Aloud.)

Nay, nothing! What should I have seen?

CROMWELL.

Eh! the cathedral. The door upon the side is most especially admired. Did you see it?

DAVENANT (aside).

He has no suspicion.

(Aloud.)

Yes, my lord; but the whole structure is in wretched taste.

CROMWELL.

In wretched taste! in wretched taste! easily said. 'T is a fine structure, and doth well deserve our admiration. Naught could surpass that temple, even among ancient masterpieces, did not the Egyptian idol-worship cast a blot upon it.

(After a pause.)

Saw you in the city nothing more of moment?

DAVENANT.

No, my lord.

CROMWELL (smiling).

Nor paid a visit of civility, for instance, to a certain Stuart?

DAVENANT (aside, in consternation).

Unexpected blow!

(Aloud.)

My lord, I swear I saw him not.

CROMWELL.

I know the faithful Papists by their oaths! But, tell me, who put out the lights? Was 't my Lord Mulgrave?

DAVENANT (aside).

He knows all!

CROMWELL.

I know that you did not, upon your honor, see the king. You wear a hat of curious shape. I pray you pardon my familiarity, but would you deign to change it for my own, my friend?

DAVENANT (aside).

I am betrayed!

(Aloud.)

My lord . . .

CROMWELL (snatching his hat).

Nay, give it me! I thank you.

(He hastily thrusts his hand into the hat and takes therefrom the king's letter, which he unfolds and reads with avidity. He interlards his perusal of it with triumphant exclamations.)

Very good! So Rochester 's the Devil's Chaplain! Cleverly devised in sooth. Most excellent! They fancy 't is not difficult to close my eyes. They cozen me, put me to sleep, and capture me; it could not be improved upon.

(To Davenant.)

Your tragi-comedies must be beyond compare, my master, if your works do match your perfidy.

(To Thurlow, who enters.)

Thurlow, let this gentleman be taken to the Tower.

(Thurlow goes out and returns with six Puritan musketeers, in whose midst the crestfallen Davenant takes his place without resistance. Cromwell dismisses them with a laugh of bitter irony.)

Charles furnished you with headgear, I do furnish you with lodgings in my turn. May Heaven give you joy!

DAVENANT (aside).

O untoward catastrophe!

(Exit with the guards.)

THURLOW.

My lord, the Parliament, to whom a holy minister, according to your Highness's command, in solemn exhortation hath held forth, brings hither for your sanction divers bills, and notably the humble address, whereby the crown upon you is conferred.

CROMWELL.

Admit them.

(Exit Thurlow.)

Ah me! 't is a troublesome affair! By their own artifice I'd have them brought to naught. I fain would take them in the net they spread for me.

(He glances alternately at Rochester's parchment and Davenant's letter.)

I have them all now in my hands . . .

(He closes his hands with a violent gesture.)

And naught remains for me to do but crush them all! The Lord is manifestly on my side. Aha! the Parliament!

(Enter members of Parliament, in the costume worn on ceremonious occasions, introduced by Thurlow. At their head is the Speaker in his robe of office, followed by the clerks of Parliament, and preceded by the sergeants-at-arms, the mace-bearers with the mace, and the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod. Cromwell ascends to the protector's chair of state, and the procession halts gravely a few paces away, outside the circle of chairs.)

SCENE XIV

CROMWELL, EARL OF CARLISLE, WHITELOCKE, STOUPE, THURLOW, and the PARLIAMENT.

(At a sign from Cromwell, Carlisle and Thurlow draw near.)

CROMWELL (in an undertone to Carlisle).

Lord Carlisle! arrest without a moment's loss of time the men on guard to-night at the park gate.

(Lord Carlisle bows and exit.)

(In an undertone to Thurlow, handing him Rochester's parchment.)

Take this instanter to the Strand—one Bloum.

(Pointing to the superscription.)

Here thou wilt see his dwelling-place. Or rather, that my plans may be more fully executed, let Sir Richard Willis be the messenger. Away with you!

THURLOW (taking the parchment, and bowing).

My lord, 't is done!

(Exit.)

CROMWELL (aside).

This name of Bloum, in my opinion, doth disguise old Ormond, whom my star will soon place in my power.

(He sits down and puts on his hat. Whitelocke and Stoupe take their places beside him.)

(Aloud.)

We are ready now to hear you, gentlemen.

THE SPEAKER. (He and all his fellows are standing, with uncovered heads.)

My lord, we bring you certain acts of Parliament. By that which we do offer for your sanction, will your Highness judge of our attachment to the righteous cause. Vouchsafe to ratify our acts.

CROMWELL.

We will consider.

THE SPEAKER.

Clerk of Parliament, perform your duty.

THE CLERK OF PARLIAMENT (in a loud voice, with the journal of debates open in his hand).

June the twenty-fifth, in the ninth year of the independence God hath given us. Here follow the last bills in Parliament enacted. *Primo*. Considering that men may sin unwittingly, as Noah did, from overindulgence in the fruit of the vine, and take in vain without malign intent names held in veneration, the Parliament aforesaid doth ordain, having intent to temper present laws thereon with mercy, that henceforth all drunkards shall be punished with the lash, and profane swearers with the cord.

CROMWELL.

'T is merciful indeed. Who blasphemes God, to whom we pray, is no less great a knave than any murderer, or any actor! Why inflict a lesser punishment upon him? These are temporary laws, however, and we do consent.

(The speaker and his fellow-members bow.)

THE CLERK (reading on).

Secundo. The recent victories achieved by Admiral Sir Robert Blake shall be commemorated by a universal fast. The House of Commons, having long and earnestly con-

o'er the holy books, doth grant to him a diamond worth five hundred pounds, and doth give order that his splendid feats be given immortality upon its records.

CROMWELL.

We consent.

(All bow once more. Thurlow enters and takes his place beside the protector.)

THURLOW (in an undertone to Cromwell).

'T is done.

THE CLERK (continuing).

Tertio. The tumults lately instigated in the town of York by divers evil-minded persons having frozen English hearts with holy horror, the said Parliament, in order that the rebels may be put without the law's pale, without loss of time, doth launch its writ of *quo warranto* at the ancient charter of their city.

CROMWELL (in an undertone to Thurlow).

Twenty soldiers would be worth a hundred *quo warrantos*. I will look to that.

(Aloud.)

We do consent.

(All bow once more.)

THE CLERK (resuming).

Quarto. The House, in order to replenish the depleted treasury, doth order that each Englishman, forgiveness seeking for some heinous sin in his past life, do fast one day in each and every week to the profit of the state. A method rare, conforming strictly to the holy ordinances, to save one's soul while giving aid to the finances.

CROMWELL.

We do consent.

(All bow again.)

THE CLERK (continuing in a louder tone).

Quinto. THE HUMBLE PETITION OR SUPPLICATION TO THE HERO OF ZION!

(All the members of Parliament bow to the ground: Cromwell acknowledges their salute with a nod.)

Having considered that 't is custom immemorial for all deliberations by a king to be concluded, and that God himself, when he had given laws unto his chosen people, changed the pulpit to a throne, the lawmakers to kings; and having heard the arguments on one side and the other, Parliament doth humbly show unto the lord protector that the nation needs must have a single individual for head, on whom the title of the former race of kings may be bestowed, and doth solicit Oliver, Protector of England, to accept the crown with an hereditary title.

THE SPEAKER (to Cromwell).

My lord, I ask a hearing.

CROMWELL.

Speak.

THE SPEAKER.

My lord! in all times, recent or far distant, kings have ruled the nations of the world. The book of books, which doth abound in wisdom, saith in many places: *Reges gentium*. If we reflect on Gabaon and Actium, we see that when a mortal strife arises in the bosom of a nation, 't is a Gordian knot that always must be severed by a sword. That sword becomes a sceptre, and thereby doth prove that all momentous questions by a king must be resolved. I know that eminent divines adopt the theory that Christ, assisted by his saints, may reign himself; but he who regulates the immortal destiny of man, is not a king who can be seen by mortal eyes; for earthly kingdoms, kings of flesh and blood; *Reges substantiales*, as the axioms have it. These are arguments that none can contravene. The

republic is the lowest of all forms of government; the people need a king in whom they may repose their trust. For, good my lord, whatever men may say, the people may be likened to the heron, which can only sleep when standing on one foot. And is the sleeping heron by that token maimed? The nation is that heron. Seeks it to avenge its wrongs, the army is its beak, the Houses are its wings. But when the ship of state is safely moored at last, then let it sleep upon one foot! *Stans pede in uno*. The logic is too clear to need elaboration. Wherefore, your Highness, holding forth the sword of Judah and the rod of Aaron o'er Europe prostrate at your feet, be King of England, be the heron's foot! We do invoke laws recognized throughout the world. *Dixi quid dicendum*, in the name of England's House of Commons.

(The speaker, having concluded his harangue, bows, and Cromwell, lost in thought, is silent for some time; at last, he looks up at the ceiling, folds his arms and heaves a profound sigh.)

CROMWELL.

We will consider.

(General astonishment.)

THE SPEAKER (aside).

What do I hear?

WHITELOCKE (in an undertone to Thurlow).

What doth he say? Doth he refuse?

THURLOW.

He hesitates. He fears some hidden danger.

CROMWELL (in an undertone to Thurlow).

It must be so! We needs must temporize. Exposed to the assaults of cavaliers, let us make sure of Puritan neutrality in the impending struggle; let us not, in this twofold dilemma, stick two thorns into our foot, or take a double burden in our arms. First let us break the net that Ormond draws around us. I shall still have time to lay my hand upon the crown. Let us appease the Puritans by seeming to decline the proffered honor.

(Aloud.)

Go in peace! We will take counsel of the Lord!

(Exeunt all, except Thurlow, with profound reverences, and gestures of amazement.)

SCENE XV

CROMWELL, THURLOW.

THURLOW (aside).

Within the hour, some change hath taken place.

CROMWELL (aside).

'T is well! until to-morrow let them be deceived by my reluctance.

(Both remain silent for a moment. Cromwell, leaning upon the arms of his chair seems to be engrossed in thought. At last Thurlow walks toward him and bows.)

THURLOW.

My lord, 't is late.

CROMWELL (abruptly).

Go bid them ring the curfew.

THURLOW.

Need you not a little rest?

CROMWELL.

Aye. But I have no great desire for slumber.

THURLOW.

Where doth my lord lie to-night?

CROMWELL (aside).

Ah! what a life is mine! To hide each night like any skulking thief! On every side, around us, aye, and in our heart, dread, always dread.

(Aloud to Thurlow.)

Place my bed here.

THURLOW.

What! in the Painted Chamber? Charles's judges . . .

CROMWELL (aside).

Ah! again that souvenir!

THURLOW.

But in this room, my lord, assembled . . .

CROMWELL (aside).

Charles, forsooth!

(Aloud.)

You have too long a memory, my friend! Obey!

(Thurlow bends his head, goes out, and returns followed by servants, who make ready a bed and bring two torches. Cromwell, who has looked on in silence, walks up to Thurlow when the servants have retired.)

Moreover, when 't is dark, the ghosts, if there be ghosts, will not see me.

(Grasping Thurlow's hand and pointing to the bed.)

Yon bed is not for me.

THURLOW (surprised).

For whom else, pray?

CROMWELL (in an undertone).

Speak not so loud. The man for whom this bed 's made ready, hath no fear of ghosts of kings and headless spectres.

THURLOW.

But what secret . . .?

CROMWELL.

Hold thy peace. Do what thou 'rt bid; anon thou wilt know all.

THURLOW (*aside*).

I stand amazed. 'T is thus he doth make use of us. To carry out his plans, know nothing of the mystery that doth envelop them, and always hold our peace! to be deaf, dumb and blind by times; again to have a hundred eyes, a hundred voices and a hundred arms, if need be!

(*Aloud.*)

Pardon me, my lord, if I make bold—some danger threatens you, what might it be?

(*Pointing to the bed.*)

And who 's to take your place here?

CROMWELL.

Hold thy peace! My chaplain is a laggard!

(*Aside, striding back and forth across the front of the stage.*)

Ah! how self-complacent are they all! they think they have me in their clutches. Ormond laughs on this side, Rochester on that. 'T is

well! their craft doth now meet ours hand to hand. They dig my grave to fit their slender stature!

(*He halts in front of the table on which the two torches are burning, and, as if dazzled by the light, addresses Thurlow roughly.*)

Wherefore so much light? one torch is quite enough: pray introduce some slight economy in my outlay.

(*He blows out one of the torches himself.*)

'T is thus one doth put out his life who is one's foe. A breath! and all is over. Well! what of my chaplain?

(*Enters Rochester, accompanied by a page, who bears upon a golden salver a golden goblet, in which a sprig of rosemary can be seen.*)

THURLOW.

He is here.

CROMWELL.

At last!

(*He rubs his hands joyfully.*)

SCENE XVI

THE SAME: LORD ROCHESTER.

LORD ROCHESTER.

The cup is full, and Noll must drink it. Ah! he 'll have a glorious nap! I drained the phial. In good sooth I render the poor man a service in that I do grant him respite from remorse: thanks to my friendly care he 'll not have slept so soundly, on my honor, for a weary while.

(He takes the salver from the page, who retires, and presents it to Cromwell, with a low bow.)

(Aloud.)

My lord . . .

(Aside.)

I still must stand on ceremony.

(Aloud.)

Drink this draught my hands have blessed.

CROMWELL (sneeringly).

Oh! you have blessed it?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Yes.

(Aside.)

'Sdeath! what a look!

CROMWELL.

'T is well. This draught should do me good?

LORD ROCHESTER.

Aye, hippocras possesses wondrous soporific qualities, my lord.

CROMWELL.

Then drink it off yourself.

(He suddenly takes the goblet from the salver and hands it to him.)

LORD ROCHESTER (recoiling in dismay).

My lord! . . .

(Aside.)

A veritable thunderbolt!

CROMWELL (with an enigmatical smile).

How now! you hesitate? Be not surprised, young man, I prithee, by the favors we bestow on you. The end 's not yet. Take it, my master! Overcome the awe, which doth perchance deter you: drink . . .

(He forces the terror-stricken Rochester to take the goblet.)

Know you not how we do cherish you? May all your blessings fall on your own head!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

I am o'erwhelmed!

(Aloud.)

Look you, my lord . . .

CROMWELL.

I bid you drink!

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Some prodigy hath lately come to pass.

(Aloud.)

I swear to you . . .

CROMWELL.

Nay, drink; swear afterward.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

And our great plot? and all our clever preparations?

CROMWELL.

Drink !

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Noll doth surpass us all in cunning.

CROMWELL.

Must I urge you more ?

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Here goes to take the pill !

(He drinks.)

CROMWELL (with a sardonic laugh).

How like you it ?

LORD ROCHESTER (setting the goblet down upon the table).

God save the king !

(Aside.)

For my part, I am saved from Guggligoy. Noll may e'en do with me as he lists. For what care I ? My better half was waiting at the door. I fall,—and therein is my shipwreck much less hard to bear,—from Scylla to Charybdis, from my wife to Cromwell ! One forces you to fight, the other to sleep. I have changed demons, that is all. But how I yawn—already ?

(He sits down upon one of the folding chairs.)

THURLOW (to Cromwell).

Was it poison he did drink ?

LORD ROCHESTER (yawning).

I' faith, the question is most flattering to Cromwell and to me !

CROMWELL (in an undertone to Thurlow).

That we shall see.

THURLOW (aside, glancing at Rochester).

Poor man !

LORD ROCHESTER (yawning).

Ah ! my head swims.

(Yawning again.)

When one has played in comedy all day, has fasted.—prayed—preached overmuch, and sworn a very little,—worn a saintly mask, and taken to himself a Hebrew name,—endured with resignation old Noll's discourse—on the Bible—'t is a cruel thing—

(He yawns.)

to go to sleep at the catastrophe !

(Yawning again.)

God grant I wake not hanged ! But with me Ormond will be lost ; that is my sole regret. Away with the sad thought !

(He yawns.)

Phial of hell ! I scarce can raise my head. Give you good-night, good Master Oliver. God save the king !

(His head falls back, and he sleeps.)

CROMWELL (with his eyes fixed upon Rochester).

Sublime devotion ! Who, I prithee, would do this for me ?

(To Thurlow.)

Let us bestow him on the bed.

(Together they carry Rochester to the bed in a corner of the stage, and lay him upon it without awaking him. At that moment there is a knock upon a low door which opens upon one of the passages surrounding the Painted Chamber.)

THURLOW (with a perturbed air).

Someone doth knock at yonder door.

CROMWELL.

Open ! I know who comes.

THURLOW (opening the door).

The rabbi !

SCENE XVII

CROMWELL, THURLOW, MANASSEH—BEN-ISRAEL: LORD ROCHESTER, asleep.

CROMWELL (to Manasseh, who prostrates himself as he crosses the threshold).

What doth the Jew bring?

(Manasseh rises and draws near Cromwell with a mysterious air.)

MANASSEH (in an undertone to Cromwell).

Money.

(He opens his frock and shows the protector a large bag which he can hardly carry.)

CROMWELL (to Thurlow).

Go.

(In a low tone.)

But go not far.

(Thurlow bows and exit.)

MANASSEH.

The Swedish brig is taken, and I fly to bring my lord his share.

CROMWELL (examining the bag).

How now! what idle talk is this? my share!

MANASSEH (biting his lips).

That is to say, your lordship, on account.

CROMWELL.

'T is well!

(He takes the bag and places it on the table at his side.)

MANASSEH (aside).

Naught can escape that lynx's eye. The cavaliers at least are easily deceived. I take their ship from them, and give them credit at my bank. Thus, thanks to my manipulation,

their resources fail, and I do shrewdly loan to them at twelve per cent. the money I have stolen from them; for to steal from Christians is a meritorious deed.

CROMWELL.

What dost thou know that 's new, thou face of purgatory?

MANASSEH.

Naught, save that 't is rumored in the city, that an astrologer was hanged at Dover.

CROMWELL.

'T was well done. But art not an astrologer thyself?

MANASSEH (after a moment's hesitation).

Thou shalt not bear false witness, saith the decalogue. Yes, I do understand the book, unfathomable to the devil, wherein Zoroaster read and Solomon. Yes, I can read your good or evil fortune in the sky.

CROMWELL (aside, with his eyes fixed upon the Jew).

Strange destiny! to spy upon the secrets of mankind, and read the stars! Astrologer up yonder, here below a spy!

MANASSEH. (He walks quickly to an open window at the back of the stage, through which can be seen the sky, studded with stars.)

Look you, my lord, there, near the Scorpion, e'en now, I see . . .

CROMWELL.

What dost thou see?

MANASSEH (without taking his eyes from the sky).

Your star.

(Turning to Cromwell, with a solemn air.)

By me the veil that shrouds your future may be torn away.

CROMWELL (with a start).

In very truth? can it be so? But no, old man, thou liest! Fear'st thou not to feel the sharp point of a dagger?

MANASSEH (gravely).

If I lie, may death, whose blows undo us, close these eyes to which the stars make answer.

CROMWELL (pensively, aside).

Can it be? To raise the curtain that conceals one's destiny; to read the distant future in the distant sky; to analyze the life, the character of every man; to solve the riddle, read the explanation of the mystery, the words an overruling finger, to our eyes invisible, hath writ with far-off suns upon the heavens' page! Ah! what a power is this! 't is e'en to share God's crown. And I, who looked no higher than a paltry throne! I, who was proud to shine resplendent on the eminence where other kings have shone! I scorned this Jew, forsooth! But what am I compared with him? What is my power beside his empire? What is the goal to which I do aspire, beside the goal that he attains? His kingdom is the world, and no horizon hath. But no, it cannot be. The reason—Ah! the reason! bottomless abyss, which swallows everything and naught gives back! Blind doubt, that doth deny for lack of comprehension! Fools appeal to it, and laugh. For 't is the shortest way. And yet, whence should this power be derived? Each creature

hath its place assigned to it by God. Of living things, whereof the endless chain all nature doth embrace, all in their proper spheres remain, each group around its common centre. Beasts know naught of man, and man knows naught of God. The heavens have their secret, we have ours. Can the soul look over from one world into another? can it bring the torch that lights the dead among the living? does it abide forever on one side the grave? has it the power, after death, to leave the sepulchre, or hence to find its way into the tomb? Who knows? Must we deny the truth of all we do not see? Does death break every bond? Have we not seen, moreover, terrifying things? But that mortal man should read upon the heavens' flaming page! Who knows what power God doth give the soul when he doth fashion it? But what! this impure man, this Jew, this miscreant, interpret the symbolic meaning of the universe! and desecrate with his unholy gaze the Holy of Holies! Wherefore not? what know we? All is mystery. One reason more, perchance! If he could but interpret to my doubting mind the language of my star? if he could tell me what will be the end of the impending struggle? Come! we are alone, no witnesses at hand. I'll test his power.

(Aloud.)

Jew!

MANASSEH (who has kept his eyes fixed upon the sky, turns and bows).

My lord?

CROMWELL.

If it be true that this celestial ray your soul illumines with its mystic light, and to your eyes imparts prophetic vision . . .

(He pauses, and seems to hesitate.)

MANASSEH (prostrating himself).

Master, what do you require at your servant's hands?

CROMWELL (lowering his voice).

To know the future.

MANASSEH (rising and drawing himself up).

What sayest thou? dost thou dare raise thine eyes so high, uncircumcised? Thy soul would see unveiled, despite the barriers of flame, yon stars, the golden sand, the diamond mist, which stud the spacious firmament's unfathomable depths! Thou wouldst know the secret of the sky, abode of glory, mystic sanctuary, glowing laboratory, where Jehovah sits, relaxing not his grasp upon the unalterable axis and the constant compass! pierce the three elements, air, water, fire, the threefold veil that shrouds the sky, the threefold wall that doth confine the earth! and know what suns the fiery letters are, wherewith God's diadem doth blaze at dead of night! Thou, read the future! Couldst thou e'en endure the aspect of the great arcana, godless man, and live? Thou, who art ever given o'er to worldly interests, what hast thou done to that end with thy days and nights? What mystery unraveled, what test undergone? Behold my pallid wrinkled brow; I have attained Tobias's great age. Through this contracted and deceitful world I've gone my way, nor have I for an instant from the other world removed my eyes. Think well on that! in a whole century not for one day, not for one hour! Ah! how many times have I, at night, left my abode, to listen at the doors of tombs, to drive away a worm that gnawed at the unclean shreds! How I rejoiced, king of that sombre realm, when I at last could change a corpse into a phantom, and compel a dead man, taken from the gallows-tree, to stammer a few sounds from the celestial alphabet! The dead revealed to me the problem of the worlds; and I have almost caught a glimpse of the resplendent being, who, upon the orb

of heaven, as upon the winding-sheet's thick folds, doth write his awe-inspiring name, the name that's known to none but him. But thou!—the constellations, to thine eyes, whose power vanishes when night comes on, are as a fire that gives no light! Hast thou, in thy devouring zeal to lose thyself in the great work, beheld thy beard turn white, thy hairs fall out? Hast thou, e'en though thou art the peer of the wise men of old, dragged out thy weary days proscribed, contemned and broken-hearted?

CROMWELL (interrupting him, impatiently).

'T is enough. I pay thee here to do my will.

MANASSEH.

Thou dost confound two things. Man may serve man. Yes, while I live an uncompleted life, and while this flesh doth still my skeleton o'erlay, mine eyes may minister to thy ambitious projects here on earth; but when, I prithee, promised I to read the skies for thee?

CROMWELL (aside).

Nay, 't is no hypocrite who doth speak thus. He hath faith in his science, and doth boast of its proscription.

(Aloud, in a vehement tone.)

Tell me, if my planet is propitious to my plans: obey.

MANASSEH.

I cannot.

CROMWELL.

But 't is my will.

MANASSEH.

It is thy will?

CROMWELL (putting his hand to his dagger).

This dagger, if it cannot make thee speak, will soon put thee to silence.

MANASSEH (after a moment's hesitation).

Will not thy cheek pale, if, in the mystic rite, I mingle hell and heaven, the Talmud and the Koran?

CROMWELL.

No.

MANASSEH.

The mind yields to the sword, the wise man to the tyrant. Speak, my son.

CROMWELL.

Reveal to my bewildered soul the secret of my life and of my destiny. When I was young, I had a vision. Because of my plebeian origin, I had been driven from those famous lawns, the glory of all Oxford, whereon none may tread, an he be not of gentle blood. I had returned to my poor cell, and there I wept, and cursed the lowly station wherein I was born. Night came: I sat, awake, beside my bed, when suddenly an icy breath congealed my flesh, and close beside me, as I sat in mortal fear, I heard a voice, which said: "*Honor to King Cromwell!*" This voice, almost inaudible, spoke with a menacing, and still a plaintive accent. In the darkness, pale and overcome with dread, I rose and looked about to see who spake thus to me. 'T was a severed head. Surrounded in the shadow by a ghastly light, it wore about its pallid brow a halo—aye, a halo of the hue of blood, in which could still be seen the remnant of a crown. It moved not—see, old man, how I do shudder at the thought!—but gazed upon me with a cruel laugh, and murmured low: "*Honor to King Cromwell!*" I took one step. It vanished utterly, and left no trace, save that my heart was, by that prodigy, benumbed forever! *Honor to King Cromwell!* Dost thou hear, Manasseh? and what sayest thou to it? Night, the flickering lights, a hideous head, the fragment of a phantom, promising

a kingdom with a ghastly laugh—ah! 't was, in good sooth, horrible, Manasseh, was it not? That head? Since then, upon a cold and gloomy day, a winter's day, amid a restless multitude, I saw it once again, but it was mute. For, hark ye—it was hanging from the headsman's hand!

MANASSEH (thoughtfully).

In truth? Ezekiel, Jethro's son-in-law, had visions less redoubtable, my son. Not even that Belshazzar in his drunken orgy saw did equal it; nor does the Toldos Jeschut tell of aught resembling this that thee befell. To see the severed head of a still living king; 't is passing strange!

CROMWELL.

'T was frightful beyond words!

MANASSEH (reflecting).

Perchance—but no. The spectres I recall have always taken vengeance for the past; thine for the future. Wert thou not sleeping?

CROMWELL.

Nay.

MANASSEH.

The like was never seen! Hadst thou not been awake 't would be a dream, and I have known of dreams more strange.

(He falls to musing again.)

A ghost that came not from the tomb! In my long life I have not seen the like.

(He turns to Cromwell.)

What odor didst thou notice when it vanished?

CROMWELL (sharply).

What care I for that? What is the meaning of my vision? Speak. Is it the truth? or is it mere illusion? *Honor to King Cromwell!* Am I to be king? Remove the veil that hides my destiny.

MANASSEH (with his eyes fixed upon the sky).

Aye, yonder is the star! Where'er it shone, between the zenith and the nadir, I should recognize it; fixed in its place, one seems to see it grow as one doth gaze upon it. Brightly it shines, but at its centre is a spot.

CROMWELL (testily).

Thy gaze hath long enough been fixed upon the sky. Shall I be king?

MANASSEH.

My son, 't were vain for me to seek to flatter thee; one cannot falsify the signs of heaven. I cannot hide from thee that in its course elliptical thy star doth form no mystic triangle with Jod and Zain.

CROMWELL.

What care I for thy triangles? Thou son of Cain, expound to me the meaning of the severed head! Shall I be king some day?

MANASSEH.

Not so, save by a miracle.

CROMWELL (sharply, with a displeased air).

What meanest thou by miracle?

MANASSEH.

A miracle . . .

CROMWELL.

What meanest thou, I say?

MANASSEH.

A miracle.

CROMWELL.

Tell me, am I a miracle?

MANASSEH (pensively).

It may be.

CROMWELL.

In that case sayest thou that I shall mount the throne?

MANASSEH.

Nay, nay; I cannot change the answers of the heavens.

CROMWELL.

No? What was that vision then, in God's name? Was it a ghastly joke of death? But 't is more like that you and all your fellows are impostors, conjuring with planets upon earth.

MANASSEH (solemnly).

My son, give me thy hand, and blaspheme not.

(Cromwell, as if cowed by the astrologer's authoritative manner, gives him his hand. Manasseh seizes it, examines it, and sings in an undertone, without taking his eyes from it.)

Hence, ye evil spirits hated,
Witches all, rejuvenated
By a pestilential potion,
Dragons, lunar elf and fairy,
And the spinners centenary,
Breathing hard at every motion!

Hence, ye ghosts, white-robed and shaven,
Asps, and ghouls who from the raven
Steal his prey that reeks and fumes;
Hideous dwarfs, soul-hunting demons,
Vampires, jinns and cacodemons,
And flames that flit about the tombs!

Don the patriarchal pall,
And the belt zodiacal,
With rings of gold each finger hide,
The amice, mitre conical,
The purple scarf canonical,
And scarlet tunic double-dyed!

(Aloud, after a moment's pause.)

Thou art in dire peril.

CROMWELL.

Of what nature?

MANASSEH.

Death. My son, if thou 'ldst be king, thy death is sure.

CROMWELL.

'T is sure? my death?

MANASSEH (pointing to Cromwell's heart).

There will the blow be dealt.

CROMWELL (putting his hand to his heart).

Here?

MANASSEH (nodding his head).

There.

CROMWELL.

And when?

MANASSEH.

To-morrow.

CROMWELL.

Dost thou not lie?

MANASSEH.

Thou son of Ammon! Lie! Wouldst have me here and now evoke thy demon? First, to bring him to subjection, thou must say with me eight lines beginning all with the same letter.

(Cromwell seems to hesitate at this suggestion. At this juncture, Rochester turns over in his sleep, and draws a long breath.)

MANASSEH (uneasily).

Stay—someone is listening.

(He walks toward the bed and discovers Rochester.)

Yes! the charm is broken. He has heard all!

CROMWELL.

Nay, thinkst thou so? that he could overhear us?

MANASSEH.

Without doubt.

CROMWELL.

Then he must die.

(He draws his dagger and approaches Rochester, who is still asleep.)

MANASSEH.

Strike! strike!—thou couldst not do a more praiseworthy deed.

(Aside.)

A Christian by a Christian hand dispatched.

CROMWELL.

No man shall know what passed 'twixt Cromwell and the Jew! So he must die!

(He raises his dagger over Rochester, but checks himself.)

Yet sure it is he sleeps.

MANASSEH (taking hold of his arm as if to guide it).

How now!

CROMWELL (still in suspense):

He is so young!

MANASSEH.

It is the Sabbath day! strike!

CROMWELL (starting back).

'T is a day of fast! Ah! what is this I do? upon a day of fasting and divine repose, I was about to soil my hands with murder, and I listened to a wizard!

(He throws down the dagger.)

Jew, begone! . . .

(Calling.)

Thurlow!

THURLOW (hurrying in).

My lord!

MANASSEH (in surprise).

Your lordship!

CROMWELL (to Manasseh).

Go, I say.

MANASSEH (aside).

Has he been suddenly attacked by vertigo?

CROMWELL. (He walks up to the Jew and speaks in a low tone.)

Begone! Thy death's decreed beforehand, if thou sayest a single word of what hath happened here.

(The Jew bows to the ground and exit.)

(To Thurlow.)

Ah! Thurlow, save me from yon Jew! aye, save me from myself!

THURLOW (anxiously).

What is 't, my lord?

CROMWELL (composing his features).

'T is nothing. Thurlow, I do love thee.

THURLOW.

But you said—you seemed disturbed in mind.

CROMWELL.

Did I say aught?

THURLOW.

You spoke, my lord.

CROMWELL (abruptly).

Of nothing! hold thy peace, and follow me.

THURLOW.

Great God! how pale you are!

CROMWELL (with a bitter smile).

'T is but the ghostly flickering of this torch. Come, I have need of thee.

(Thurlow follows Cromwell, and pauses as he passes Rochester's bed.)

THURLOW.

See how he sleeps!

CROMWELL.

Aye, a deep sleep,—and very near to death.

(Exeunt.)



C. Barber sc.

C. Chantry sc.



CROMWELL.

ACT FOURTH SCENE V

ACT FOURTH

CROMWELL.

But I do not with my own hand extinguish the birth-morn. Rise!
(Manassah rises. Cromwell points to a stone bench near the gate.)
Sit there.

THE POSTERN-GATE OF THE PARK

At the night, a sentry of the sentry-guard, who is posted at the postern-gate of the park, stands out against the dark sky. At the night, a sentry of the sentry-guard, who is posted at the postern-gate of the park, stands out against the dark sky. At the night, a sentry of the sentry-guard, who is posted at the postern-gate of the park, stands out against the dark sky.

SCENE I

CROMWELL, disguised as a soldier, with a heavy musket on his shoulder, leather cut-throat, broad-brimmed hat with high cone-shaped crown, long boots.

(He paces back and forth in front of the gate, after the manner of a soldier on sentry-go. A few seconds after the curtain rises, the voice of a sentinel is heard in the distance.)

All goes well! Are you on guard?

CROMWELL. (He places the butt of his musket on the ground and answers.)

All goes well! Are you on guard?

(A third sentinel replies in the distance.)


All goes well! Are you on guard?

CROMWELL (after a momentary pause)

Yes, I am on guard,—for once and all. By prudence led to take this course. With Cromwell purpose with his own hand his door to open to his murderers.

(The sound of footsteps and voices is heard in the distance.)

So soon? But no, midnight has not yet struck. 'T is some belated passer-by.



CROMWELL

ACT FOURTH SCENE V

THE SENTINEL

CROMWELL

But I do not with my own hand exterminate an earth-worm. Rise!

(Manasseh rises. Cromwell points to a stone bench near the gate.)

Sit there.

(The Jew takes his seat in the dark corner of the bench, as if dazed with terror.)

Remember first of all to hold thy peace. But one word, and thy soul will leave thy body and go hence, to finish at its ease thy dead men's alphabet.



ACT FOURTH

THE SENTINEL

THE POSTERN-GATE OF THE PARK OF WHITEHALL

At the right, a clump of trees; in the background other clumps of trees, above which the Gothic turrets of the palace stand out against the dark sky. At the left the gate of the park, a small arched gate, richly and profusely carved. It is quite dark.

SCENE I

CROMWELL, disguised as a soldier, with a heavy musket on his shoulder, leather cuirass, broad-brimmed hat with high cone-shaped crown, long boots.

(He paces back and forth in front of the gate, after the manner of a soldier on sentry-go. A few seconds after the curtain rises, the voice of a sentinel is heard in the distance.)

All goes well! Are you on guard?

CROMWELL. (He places the butt of his musket on the ground and answers.)

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(A third sentinel replies in the distance.)

All goes well! Are you on guard?

CROMWELL (after a momentary pause).

Yes, I am on guard,—for one and all! By prudence led to take this course, doth Cromwell purpose with his own hand his door to open to his murderers.

(The sound of footsteps and voices is heard in the distance.)

So soon? But no, midnight has not yet struck. 'T is some belated passer-by.

(A voice is heard singing, but the words cannot be made out.)

Singing! the rascal hath kept fast but ill!

(The voice draws nearer, and the following words can be distinguished, sung to a monotonous air.)

When the sun sinks to rest,
Thou who goest in quest
Of fortune,
Take heed lest thou fall;
Earth dons its dark pall
Too soon.

The treacherous tide
With mist doth hide
The dune;
Along the horizon
No house to lay eyes on,
Not one!

Thieves follow thee close,
For so the thing goes

At night.

The nymphs of the wood
Sometimes wish us no good,
For spite.

Their footsteps are fleet.
Take heed lest thou meet
Some sprite.
The imps of the air
Love to dance in the rare
Moonlight.

(The voice draws nearer and nearer, and at last is silent.)

CROMWELL.

Bah! the singer's one of my four fools!—
Elespuru, I think.

SCENE II

CROMWELL, TRICK, GIRAFFE, ELESURU, GRAMADOCH.

(The jesters, Gramadoch leading, enter cautiously, feeling their way.)

ELESURU (humming).

The imps of the air
Love to dance in the rare
Moonlight.

GIRAFFE (in a low voice to Elesuru).

Elesuru, be still, I prithee. Art thou mad?

GRAMADOCH (pointing to a bank of turf behind a hedge).

Let us all hide.

CROMWELL (who does not see them).

Yes, 't is my fool returning to the palace.

(The four jesters crouch down upon the bank out of sight.)

GRAMADOCH (in an undertone).

On this spot the action of the play is concentrated now. From here we can see everything.

TRICK (in the same tone).

For that we need a parson's eye. See? on my word 't is lighter in the devil's oven.

ELESURU (in the same tone).

Whosoe'er the actors be, if they should see our faces, they would make us pay a pretty figure for our seats.

GRAMADOCH (in the same tone).

We have arrived in time. The play has not begun.

GIRAFFE (in the same tone).

Go to! will you be still?

(They cease to converse, and lie perfectly still.)

CROMWELL.

The fool has passed, unknowing that this spot, where in his drunken folly he was singing, soon will see the destiny of a great empire decided. Ah! how fortunate is this same fool! Even at Whitehall he creates about him an ideal world. He has no subjects, and no throne; he 's free. He has not in his heart a chord forever throbbing painfully. He never wears a coat of mail above that guileless heart,—for who would have his blood? What need has he of court? of retinue? of guards? He sings, he laughs, he passes on, and no one looks at him. What reck he of the future? he will always have, to clothe himself withal, a strip of velvet in the winter-time, a bit of bread bestowed upon him for his merry wit. No need has he to be forever on his guard against the ambuscades of paid assassins, but he sleeps all night, and has no frightful dreams, awakes and thinks of nothing. Ah! how fortunate is he! His words mere sound, his whole existence but a dream. And when he nears the common end of all mankind, the reaping hook of death, which spareth none, will seem a plaything to this gray-haired child! Meanwhile his voice, when we would laugh or weep, doth strike the proper note of joy or sorrow as we

will, harangue at all risks, and on all occasions sing. His animation cloaks profound repose. The living plaything of a fellow-man, a hollow and sonorous head that speaks as water murmurs and evaporates, he vibrates at the slightest touch, bestirred more swiftly than the silver bells that tremble round about his brow. The fool doth not essay, as I do, the insensate task of compassing the whole world in his thought; no words profound, no pregnant sighs do ever issue from his heart, like flames from the volcano. His soul—has he a soul?—is always fast asleep. He knows not any day what he did do the day before. He has no memory; alas, how fortunate is he! For never doth he, quickening his pace beneath some frowning arch, at night, his mind oppressed by harrowing reflections, fear to turn his head lest he should see a ghost. He has no wish that he might be forgotten, nor that the year had no thirtieth of January! Ah! thou wretched Cromwell! e'en thy fool thou enviest. Thou art omnipotent; what hast thou done with thy life?

(A pause.)

Thou reignest, aye, thy sway doth o'er the panic-stricken world extend. How dearly hast thou paid for all this grandeur! Every party hath abandoned thee; the people do deny thee; thine own family is ever with thy genius at cross purposes, and, forcing thee to make its wish thy law, doth pull thee to and fro and back and forward by thy kingly cloak! Thy very son! Ah! God in heaven! every one doth hate me, everything combines to crush me. I have foes, whose hatred is inexorable, everywhere upon this earth,—and elsewhere,—even in the tomb!—Go to! it may be better days will come again. Ah! better days! what do I say? My destiny for fifteen years past hath held its onward course as by a miracle. What wish of mine has

lacked accomplishment? The nations 'neath my yoke have settled down at last. To be made king to-morrow I have but to say a single word. What more than this could I have dreamed of in my wildest dreams? Judge, conqueror, reformer, sovereign, have not my fortunes reached their utmost goal? Ah! yes, a grand result—to play the archer here, on guard for hire! What pomp and vanity without! within how deep the wound!

(A pause.)

'T is bitter cold! 'T will soon be twelve o'clock; the hour when each spectre leaves his coffin, showing to the murderer his blood-stained hand, his gaping wound, that ever larger grows, and on his winding-sheet a ghastly stain. But what next shall I dream? So much for being here alone! Am I a child, forsooth! Ah! would to God I were! That cursed Jew left me in terror from the visions that he conjured up. He discomposed me sadly, and I tremble even now. It is so cold! might I not well repeat, to neutralize his sacrilegious words, the verse against all sorcery?

(The clock begins to strike twelve very slowly.)

(With a start.)

What noise is that? The clock! 't is the appointed time!

(He listens.)

I ne'er before had heard it at this hour. 'T is like a death-knell! like a weeping voice!

(He pauses and listens again.)

'T was it that struck the last hour of a martyr!

(After the clock has ceased to strike.)

Midnight! and I am alone! Should I invoke the saints?

(The sound of footsteps behind the trees.)

Ah! now I am myself once more! here are my murderers!

SCENE III

THE SAME: LORD ORMOND, LORD DROGHEDA, LORD ROSEBERY, LORD CLIFFORD,
DOCTOR JENKINS, SEDLEY, SIR PETER DOWNIE, SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

(The cavaliers enter stealthily, Lord Ormond and Lord Rosebery at their head. They wear broad-brimmed hats turned down over their eyes and ample black cloaks, the hems of which are raised behind by long swords. They are talking together in low tones. Cromwell shoulders his musket once more, and takes up his position under the arch of the postern.)

LORD ROSEBERY.

'T is here.

LORD ORMOND.

Aye, so it is. I recognize the spot.

(Pointing to the postern where Cromwell stands, concealed by the shadow.)

'T was through yon gate the royal hunt did enter in old times.

CROMWELL (musket on shoulder, aside).

They are the men. At last I know to whom to speak!

SIR PETER DOWNIE (to Lord Ormond).

Wilmot should here await our coming.

CROMWELL (aside, shrugging his shoulders).

He is far too shrewd.

LORD DROGHEDA (to Downie).

But can he? Has he not the duties of his office to perform? Dost think he has his neck in a wide collar?

CROMWELL (aside).

Murderers! soon all of you shall have the same; and Haman's gibbet's none too high for you.

LORD ORMOND (to the cavaliers).

Moreover, he'd have jeopardized the good success of the conspiracy; and if he be detained, why I congratulate myself that so it is.

CROMWELL (aside).

And so do I.

LORD ORMOND.

With Wilmot I am always in a fright. But let us make an end on 't.

CROMWELL (aside).

End! 't is the apt word.

LORD ORMOND (to the cavaliers).

I prithee, see to what lengths Rochester's insensate folly goes. Old Noll has, so 't is said, a pretty daughter; Wilmot is in love with her, but that is naught to me.

CROMWELL (aside).

Insulting knave!

LORD ORMOND (continuing).

He has composed a madrigal for her. A Wilmot, take upon himself to play the rhymers! More than that, forgetting what is due to my great age, and to my rank, he would have had me read the wretched stuff! I pocketed the insult with good grace; but lo! a short time since, when I was waiting in most harrowing suspense, there comes a letter from him—of importance, so 't was said. With eager hands I open it, and find within

the quatrain doing honor to the little Cromwell's charms!

CROMWELL (*aside*).

My Frances! thus to speak of her before my face!

LORD ROSEBERY (to Lord Ormond, laughingly).

My lord, it seems to me that he did persecute you shamefully!

SIR PETER DOWNIE (*laughing*).

To make one read his lines, almost as if by order of the king! 'T is to be overmuch the poet!

LORD ORMOND.

Hark to this. After these verses, sealed so carefully, from Wilmot I received a second missive. Therein was the information that doth cause our presence at this moment on this spot. And that, my friends, was writ on parchment, rolled, and tied with a red ribbon.

ALL THE CAVALIERS.

Can it be?

LORD ORMOND.

You see how oft the madman doth put us in jeopardy.

LORD CLIFFORD.

'T is horrible! Pray can it be that he deems such buffoonery amusing!

LORD ORMOND.

True, the message was intrusted to Sir Richard Willis. But it might have fallen into hands unfriendly, none the less.

LORD ROSEBERY.

We should have had no resource then but hasty flight.

DOCTOR JENKINS.

On what a slender reed one sometimes leans! I shudder as I think how many things of moment fate may balance on a madman's head! At the least change of mind, the

slightest shock, the crazy structure falls, and in a single night, a throne, a people, a whole world thus fade away.

SEDLEY.

Methinks that Davenant is missing also?

LORD ORMOND.

Davenant! a mountebank, a poet, a mere pedant! He 's in hiding. Count not on such scurvy rascals.

DOWNIE.

By the way, our good friend Richard, the usurper's son, 's in prison. Did you know, my lords? a traitor . . .

LORD DROGHEDA.

Yes, poor Richard!

CROMWELL (*aside*).

Poor parricide!

LORD ROSEBERY.

He 's such a jolly boon companion!

CROMWELL (*aside*).

Ah!

SEDLEY (to Rosebery).

His father, so I think, has learned that he did drink to the king's health this morning.

(Rosebery replies with an affirmative nod.)

CROMWELL (*aside*).

Traitor!

LORD ORMOND (to the cavaliers).

Come, the time is flying while we talk. Let us begin.

CROMWELL (*aside*).

Before my eyes their plot doth now unfold itself. To all these rats of Egypt, to this royal faction, we will throw Whitehall open like a rat-trap. Rochester 's the bait, and Cromwell the trap-door, which closes suddenly, that no one may escape!

LORD ORMOND (in an undertone to the cavaliers).

Let us accost the soldier.

(Aloud, drawing near to Cromwell.)

Hum!

CROMWELL (presenting his musket).

Who goes there?

LORD ORMOND (in an undertone to Cromwell).

COLOGNE! my brother.

CROMWELL (aside).

Ah! I've not the countersign! what shall I do?

LORD ORMOND.

COLOGNE!

CROMWELL (aside).

What to reply?

(Lord Ormond, amazed at his silence, steps back with an air of suspicion.)

LORD ROSEBERRY (to Ormond).

Well, what's the matter?

LORD ORMOND (pointing to Cromwell).

He doth not reply.

LORD ROSEBERRY.

Suppose that Cromwell by some chance hath guessed our plot? Suppose that he hath changed the palace guard?

LORD ORMOND. (The cavaliers gather anxiously around him.)

As soon as one is fairly launched upon such schemes as ours, to recoil is to lose everything! We must go forward.

(He walks up to Cromwell once more.)

CROMWELL (aside).

'T would arouse suspicion to submit too readily.

(To Ormond as he approaches.)

Who goes there?

LORD ORMOND.

COLOGNE!

CROMWELL (aside).

How shall I lead them on? how take them in the snare without the countersign?

LORD ORMOND (in an undertone to the cavaliers, who have drawn aside to the corner of the stage at the right).

Still silent as before!

LORD CLIFFORD (earnestly, in an undertone).

Well, let us kill the sentinel!

JENKINS (in an undertone to Clifford).

What! send a soul to God, nor grant it time to say a single prayer!

LORD CLIFFORD (in an undertone to Jenkins).

What boots it?

LORD ORMOND (in an undertone to Clifford).

But to strike a man behind his back!

LORD CLIFFORD (in an undertone to Ormond).

We must go on, my lord. I am much grieved for him.

ALL (in undertones to Ormond).

Yes, let us kill the fellow.

JENKINS (in an undertone).

What! you'd send him, stained with sin, to meet his Judge!

ALL (in undertones).

It must be so! yes, let him die!

CROMWELL (aside).

What are they saying there?

(The cavaliers draw their daggers and move forward toward Cromwell. Sir William Murray stops them.)

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

With all due deference, you're wrong. This man is with us, I am sure of it. Else would he, seeing us grouped here beside the wall, long since have given the alarm. Beyond a doubt, my friends, a little gold will

soon disarm him. Save for our caroluses, naught have we to fear. He holds his peace, because he fain would have a few more golden crowns. If he doth turn a deaf ear to your countersign, it is because he has the grasping temper of the Puritans. 'T were better far to buy a new safe-conduct than to poniard him, for that would make a noise.

LORD ROSEBERY.

Sir William is quite right. The malapert would scruple not to cry that we did murder him.

LORD CLIFFORD (sighing).

'T is well! let us arrange our ransom.

SIR PETER DOWNIE.

As ill luck would have it, we are but ill supplied with funds.

SEDLEY.

This Cromwell is a thief! To confiscate our brig as contraband! And this vile chief of brigands sits upon the English throne!

LORD ORMOND.

That clipper of good crowns, the Jew Manasseh, made me a small loan; but 't is all spent. Stay! I received a purse from Rochester . . .

(He feels in his doublet.)

Aye, here it is.

(He takes a purse from his pocket and shows it to the cavaliers.)

LORD ROSEBERY.

Most welcome reinforcement!

LORD CLIFFORD (pointing to Cromwell).

Ah! to pay our reckoning in honest crowns to yonder bigot, whom we might so fitly recompense with a good dagger-thrust! 'T is hard!

LORD ORMOND (handing the purse to Sir William Murray).

Sir William, do you undertake to drive the bargain. Better than we you know the methods of these saints.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (taking the purse).

Nay, have no fear.

CROMWELL (seeing Sir William coming slowly toward him, aside).

Ah! they have taken counsel. Was ever such perplexity for a mere nothing, for a single word! They fain would enter; and I fain would introduce them. Surely we should reach an understanding.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (aside).

I must needs dispatch the matter shrewdly.

CROMWELL (as Sir William draws near).

Who goes there?

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

A saint, my brother.

CROMWELL (aside).

Hypocrite!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Blest be the sword that 's girt about your waist!

CROMWELL (aside).

'T is a rare pleasure to be blessed by royalists!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (aside).

To these evangelists one must needs speak their language.

(Aloud.)

Brother! Zion had archers watching on its tower, and calling day and night to one another. You are like to them.

CROMWELL.

I thank you.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

'T is a cool night.

CROMWELL.

Aye, so it is.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

The bird sleeps in its nest, the cattle in their stalls; all nature sleeps, and you alone do watch.

CROMWELL.

My destiny doth so ordain.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

'T were better for you to be sound asleep in a good bed.

CROMWELL (aside).

Rather, for thee.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Upon the ice-cold flags, alone, your shoulder by a heavy musket chafed, you stand on guard; and he whose cross you bear, your leader, Cromwell, is profoundly sleeping!

CROMWELL.

Think'st thou so? It may not be; for Cromwell doth not sleep when I am waking.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

With what lying tales he doth cajole your ear!

CROMWELL.

Think'st thou then that he is sleeping?

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

I am sure of it. To you he owes this peaceful calm, and his sweet slumber. He takes all the pleasure, and to you leaves all the pain.

CROMWELL.

In sooth, 't is not well done on his part.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (aside).

Our affair is safe beyond a peradventure! He is malcontent; 't is well!

(Aloud.)

Doth this great Cromwell even know your name, for all your great devotion to his interests?

CROMWELL.

I think so.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (shrugging his shoulders).

Bah! how innocent you are! you simpleton!

CROMWELL (aside).

'T is a sly knave!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Would Cromwell deign to look down from his splendid throne to you? Nay, nay, my friend, he does not even know your name. I'm sure of it!

CROMWELL (aside).

He 's sure of everything save that he 'll have his head to-morrow! One would say that he did make me.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Friend, you have an honest air; but you pretend to know more than myself upon these matters.

CROMWELL.

I am wrong.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

I grew to old age at the court of the late king.

CROMWELL (aside).

The idiot! he doth forget himself. Unfaithful to his role, the cavalier doth mingle with the Puritan so soon.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

My friend, all courts at bottom are the same. You knew not that, I 'll wager?

CROMWELL (aside).

He is very deep!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

You consecrate your life to Cromwell?

CROMWELL.

Even so.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Ah well! pour out your heart's blood for him drop by drop, and he will take less thought of it, I promise you, than of the water, pure or foul, that flows beneath the bridges!

CROMWELL.

Ah! methinks that my concerns lie nearer to his heart.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

How soft you are! What matters it to him, in his exalted sphere, whether you live or die?

CROMWELL.

What knowest thou thereon?

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Go to! I prithee is thy life connected with his destiny? Wherein?

CROMWELL (aside).

To thy undoing, yes—far more than thou dost think!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Do you not look for recompense? Is it not time that he should grant it you? Aye, is it not a crying shame? You a mere common soldier! None the less, full sure am I that you do seldom leave him?

CROMWELL.

Never.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

You have taken part in all his wars?

CROMWELL.

That have I.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

And how many now are sergeants, whose deserts are less than yours?

CROMWELL (aside).

Certes, a great stride toward taking my heart captive.

(Aloud.)

Flatterer!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Not so! To treat you in such overbearing fashion! In good sooth, is he himself so great a captain?

CROMWELL (aside).

Insolent!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Look you, what is this Cromwell of whom men do make so great a matter, that he should have palaces, court equipages, valets, guards? A soldier like yourself.

CROMWELL.

No more.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (aside).

Our cause is won!

(Aloud.)

In very truth he is no more than you.

CROMWELL.

'T is true!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

If that be so, why serve him on your knees?

CROMWELL.

I do not serve him.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (aside).

Good! his feet are tangled in the net I spread.

(Aloud.)

Pray, why should not you have the place as well as he?

CROMWELL.

Indeed the change would never be discovered.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Not at all! a soldier for a soldier! How can you, that being so, perform this duty,

which doth horrify me? For a task so irksome, what 's your pay?

CROMWELL.

I am not paid.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Not paid! God save the mark! old soldiers so neglected. I do pity you.

CROMWELL (aside).

He pities me!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

To keep him without wages! Cromwell is a tyrant!

CROMWELL (aside).

Here we are!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

My wrath doth fairly stifle me!

CROMWELL (aside).

How touching!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (taking his hand).

I would fain relieve your misery, aye, and avenge you.

CROMWELL.

Avenge me!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Upon Cromwell.

CROMWELL.

Upon Cromwell!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (putting his mouth to his ear).

Open the gate for us. Let Judith be at last struck down by Holofernes!

CROMWELL.

You would say Holofernes, would you not? by Judith. You do quote the Bible all awry.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Well said.

CROMWELL.

Your beard is for a Judith somewhat black, methinks?

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (aside).

Ah! why the devil need I have recalled that story? Judith was, in very truth, a woman. But what matters it?

(Aloud.)

My friend, to Cromwell give us access while he sleeps; thou 'lt find thy good account therein.

CROMWELL.

Dost think so?

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

What is it to thee that six or seven living men pass through yon gate? My friend, at this propitious moment, fortune comes to you while sleeping, so to speak.

CROMWELL.

While sleeping!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (offering him a purse).

Take this handsel! Thou hast naught to do, save to say WHITEHALL when we say COLOGNE.

CROMWELL (aside).

The word is WHITEHALL.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Prithee, take this money. We do pay.

CROMWELL (aside).

And so do I!

(Aloud, taking the purse.)

Thanks, 't is a debt, my friend, and I am bounden to you for it.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Thou wilt keep watch for us during the interlude.

CROMWELL.

I will keep watch.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

'T is well.

(Offering his hand.)

Your hand. By Heaven! 't is a worthy fellow.

CROMWELL.

By the way, when you have Cromwell in your hands, what will you do with him?

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Why first of all, I fancy, we shall kill him. That 's the whole on 't.

CROMWELL.

A mere trifle.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

We will be content with a swift death and merciful. No one of us is cruel.

CROMWELL (aside).

Nor will I be, more than you.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Is it a bargain?

CROMWELL.

Thou hast said.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (to the cavaliers, who are waiting at the corner of the stage).

Come hither quickly. We may gain entrance to the hermitage by paying the Levite. I made no doubt of it.

LORD ORMOND (to Murray).

'T is done?

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Yes.

LORD ORMOND (to the cavaliers).

Forward.

(The cavaliers form in procession two by two, and walk toward Cromwell, who presents his musket.)

CROMWELL.

Who goes there?

LORD ORMOND.

COLOGNE.

CROMWELL.

WHITEHALL. Pass on.

LORD ORMOND (aside).

'T is well!

CROMWELL (watching the cavaliers as they pass through the postern).

So far so good.

LORD ORMOND (in an undertone to Murray).

Murray, remain and watch this fellow.

(To Cromwell.)

Brother, where shall we find Cromwell?

CROMWELL.

In the room called the Painted Chamber.

LORD ORMOND.

Good. Our forms are hidden by the darkness; nathless keep good watch.

CROMWELL.

Fear naught! Now go.

LORD ORMOND (joyfully).

At last! I near the goal; and my last years are crowned with triumph unalloyed. I have him on the hip! I soon shall lay my hands on him beneath his canopy. Behold the opportunity for which I prayed to Heaven. Cromwell is in my grasp and sleeping! Heaven doth abandon him to me.

CROMWELL (aside, looking after him).

The thing for which one prays to Heaven, hell sometimes doth grant!

(Ormond rushes through the postern, whither all the cavaliers, except Sir William Murray, have preceded him.)

SCENE IV

CROMWELL, SIR WILLIAM MURRAY; the FOUR JESTERS, still in their hiding-place.

CROMWELL (with his eyes fixed upon the gate through which the cavaliers have passed).

They 're in the trap!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (rubbing his hands).

At last we have succeeded, by my beard! This mighty Cromwell, who in the whole world no equal hath, this famous general, this subtle politician, to whom Europe sings an endless hymn of praise, this hero, this bashaw, for whom the world doth deem the sceptre far too light, the throne too narrow, lets himself be caught at last, like to a wingless bird, by eight poor fools, who have not 'twixt them all a pair of brains! for I alone can boast a brain that 's sound. Without me, nothing had been done. Go to! that Cromwell, a mere vagabond, a base adventurer, almost no gentleman, should lord it over kings as if he were a Roman emperor! But what a lesson we do teach these kings! The man whose overbearing power made them lick the dust, surprised in his own palace! and by us! O ignominy! Fifteen years of genius for no more than that!

(Turning to Cromwell, who is listening, coolly.)

Can you imagine it, my friend? Because he 's won a score of paltry battles . . .

CROMWELL (aside).

Wherein thou didst have no part!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Because with words, and sermons, and grimaces, he knows how to please the vulgar

herd, and move the masses, the whole world, instead of hooting him, doth grovel at his feet! A clown, who knows not how to make a bow! . . .

CROMWELL (aside).

He knows not how, so be it; but he doth teach others.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

'T is as I say. His manners—do almost resemble yours!

CROMWELL.

Almost?

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

You bear yourself e'en as a soldier should; you do not lift your eyes too high. You have the easy grace of a Swiss reiter, for the drill-field or the fierce charge.

CROMWELL.

You are too kind.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Nay; each man to his trade. You have no wish to take upon yourself court airs, and hoist yourself upon the throne, before the eyes of a whole nation; the poor stuff whereof your Cromwell 's made is measured by your yardstick. Say if 't was not laughable that Noll should dare display himself in broad daylight upon the royal platform. His great fortune is a strange, mad freak of fate. His manner was so awkward yesterday, when he gave audience!

CROMWELL.

Didst thou present thyself on that occasion, pray ?

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Call me not "thou," my friend. We do not walk on the same level. I am a Scotchman, you must know, of noble birth. Such men as you do run before my carriage. Know you that I bear a wolf upon my 'scutcheon? More than that, my friend, under King James the First, I had the honor to be flagellated for the Prince of Wales.

CROMWELL.

'T is true, our walks in life are not the same.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

And well it is they 're not !

CROMWELL.

Return we to what we were saying. Sometimes 't would seem you paid your court to this same Cromwell, now the object of your scorn ?

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

To serve some end. One cannot always struggle like Montrose.

CROMWELL.

Ah yes ! my gentleman besought the tyrant for a place, awaiting an occasion to betray him for the king's behoof.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

How bluntly you do say it !

CROMWELL.

Aye ; fine words are strangers to my tongue.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (aside).

The villain !

CROMWELL.

Cromwell received you ill, I wager ? or refused your suit ?

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Not he !

CROMWELL (aside).

How he doth lie !

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Nay, on the contrary, the bear with me did play the affable. He realized the honor that I deigned to do him, and he left to me the choice of all the gifts at his disposal.

CROMWELL.

True, the choice between the window and the door.

(Aloud.)

But why, if that be so, do you now turn against him ?

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

I reflected. How resign one's self to serve an arrant upstart, reigning like a corporal who gives an order ; a clodhopper who tries to smile and shows you all his teeth, and with his knees turned in returns your courtesies !

CROMWELL.

I understand.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

And then I learned that his downfall was imminent.

CROMWELL.

And the divine right of the Stuarts came into your head !

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Yes, the divine right of the Stuarts, Cromwell's rank rusticity, my friends' entreaties too, on the one hand, success against so pitiful a creature being sure, I took part in the plot.

CROMWELL.

I do full justice to your arguments.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

You understand, my friend. The principle is there. William the Norman violated it in the old days; but he repaired the wrong by marrying his son, Henry the First, when still a child, to Maud of Scotland. From the Athelings and them, the Stuarts trace descent; and thence it follows that King Charles the Second, sprung from the double race, unites the title of the Saxon and the Norman in his person.

CROMWELL.

'T is most clear.

(Aside.)

I understand but ill this subtle reasoning.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

I call on you to judge if I am right.

CROMWELL (aside).

In sooth, he doth choose well his judge!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

The claim of our young king is manifest.

CROMWELL.

Beyond a doubt.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Nathless 't is that same claim a Cromwell dares contest! Was ever heard the like? that this old turkey-vulture should desert his barnyard for the nest of the young eagle. Were he endowed with talent, well and good! But, I repeat, 't is Jericho a-crumbling ere the trumpet sounds!

CROMWELL (aside).

Magnificent!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

His destiny seems marching kingward without stay; but 't is an empty shadow which doth vanish at the slightest touch.

CROMWELL (ironically).

An idol with a golden head whose feet are made of wax!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

To my mind he has always been a sorry wretch. Mere reputation does not hoodwink me. I had ta'en Cromwell's measure long ago. And such a creature would be king, forsooth! What times are these we live in! Why, the clown hath not the wit to circumvent a plot, or to unearth a ruse! You have a mind a hundredfold more penetrating than the poor fool who at this moment is caught napping in his bed!

CROMWELL (aside).

If he but knew how truly he doth speak, the imbecile!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Pray does he fancy that to reign 's an easy matter? He, a king? I would not even have him for a courtier.

CROMWELL.

You would be quite right!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

I grant you that he hath, perchance, such talent as is needful to brew beer. But hath he e'en the right to bear the flintlock or the ironworker's hook? Certes, no more than that. Upstart nobility! His name is not the equal of his Milton's.

CROMWELL (aside).

Insolent!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

He 's not content to be a brewer of repute, but must needs play the great man, take upon himself a tyrant's airs, and ape the world's great heroes! Are not these petty country-squires most amusing, in good sooth? He

learns to put a yoke upon the nation, overcome the hydra, govern the whole world by brewing cider!

CROMWELL (aside).

Villain!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

And, because chance served him well, he deems himself a Hugh Capet, a Moses or a Cæsar. What doth pass my comprehension is that a Warwick condescends to greet this pinchbeck king as his good cousin!

CROMWELL (aside).

Yesterday a groveling chameleon at my feet!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (as if something had suddenly occurred to him).

How now! I am myself a very simpleton!

CROMWELL.

Wherein?

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

The while our falcons yonder seize upon their prey, they leave me here, so that, if guerdons be dispensed for this night's work—as 't is most like they will—there 'll be none save for them!

CROMWELL (aside).

Vile knave!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Would they reserve for me the petty tithe? Good lack! I, an old hawk, to dance attendance here! Nay, nay! I purpose to deserve well of the king no less than they.

CROMWELL.

You will not be forgotten, take my word for it.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

I choose, like them, to lay my hands on the old devil.

CROMWELL (aside).

Go, in God's name!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Thou dost render us a service beyond price. But when the general account is settled, I will not forget thee; thou shalt be a corporal!
(Exit.)

CROMWELL (alone, shrugging his shoulders).

Go, seek! a court dwarf gauge me by his rule! the waddling goose quack at the eagle as he soars aloft!

(Enters Manasseh, walking very cautiously, a dark lantern in his hand.)

SCENE V

MANASSEH, CROMWELL.

MANASSEH. (He does not see Cromwell.)

Puritans and cavaliers, Charles Second, Cromwell,—Christians all!

CROMWELL (recognizing Manasseh, as a ray of light from his lantern falls upon him).

God! 't is the Hebrew dog! Why comes he hither? Comes he forth from some dark tomb?

MANASSEH. (He does not yet see Cromwell, who listens.)

What matter which of the two rival parties doth succumb? In either case the blood of Christians will be shed in rivers; so I hope at least! therein lies the true merit of conspiracies. But whether Ormond doth slay Oliver, or Oliver doth baffle him, 't is here that both their destinies are now to be fulfilled. My purpose is to see what is to happen. Everything doth threaten Cromwell.

CROMWELL (aside).

Traitor!

MANASSEH (continuing, and looking up at the sky).

Everything, except the stars in heaven. His death, methinks, is near, and yet his planet still doth shine forth in the zenith with a pure, clear light; and vainly I con o'er the lines his hand doth bear, I see no real danger,—save for to-morrow.

CROMWELL (aside).

For to-morrow! What says he? In God's name are these damned astrologers still charlatans in their soliloquies?

MANASSEH.

What matters it? Cromwell or Ormond needs must be destroyed. They soon will be engaged in deadly strife.

(Looking up at the starry sky.)

Ah! what a lovely night!

CROMWELL (aside).

After yon babbling courtier, this impious Jew! The carrion crow succeeds the magpie. Pitiless, remorseless, undismayed, he swoops down to demand his feast of corpses.

MANASSEH (turning his glass upon the sky).

Till the conspirators appear upon the scene, I will more closely scrutinize the curves described by Eta's satellites in Tau's orbit. With the sacred hammer I will knock upon the portal of the temple.

(He puts the glass to his eye, then checks himself.)

Twelve per cent.! In this emergency I might full sure for twice that rate have mulcted Ormond!

CROMWELL (aside).

Cromwell's spy! and banker to the cavaliers!

MANASSEH (with the glass at his eye).

The line bends in the horn of Aries . . . Nathless I have the caroluses from Cologne, and honest caroluses, even when one clips them, gain the day . . . In truth, the eclipse would in that case take place. Eleven on the

dollars, nine on the ducats. Cromwell and Ormond, both I overreach at the same time.

(At that moment the regular cry of the sentinel is heard in the distance.)

All goes well! Are you on guard?

CROMWELL (impatiently, aside).

Why need they at this moment discommode me? Naught but owls are frightened by their call. Nathless I must make answer.

(Aloud.)

All goes well! Are you on guard?

(At this unexpected voice, the Jew turns with a violent start.)

MANASSEH (aside).

Jacob! I had seen no sentinel! With what a thick veil age hath covered o'er my eyes!

(The voice of another distant sentinel is heard.)

All goes well! Are you on guard?

MANASSEH (drawing near Cromwell, with respect).

Good-morrow, master soldier.

CROMWELL (aside).

Need that sudden cry have terrified him so? How he betrayed himself!

(Aloud.)

Good-morrow, Jew!

MANASSEH (bowing a second time).

You are by my Lord Ormond stationed here?

CROMWELL.

Son of the prophets, what need hast thou that I should answer: "yes"?

MANASSEH.

To see you triumph doth rejoice my soul. So Cromwell falls at last; I give you joy.

CROMWELL.

Much thanks!

MANASSEH.

The power of the former kings revives; what happiness for you!

CROMWELL.

Aha!

MANASSEH.

I do most heartily congratulate you thereupon. You hope, no doubt, for swift promotion?

CROMWELL.

Aye. They mean to make me corporal.

MANASSEH.

A noble rank! You will be corporal, my friend; 't is very fine! A corporal commands four men! Superb! and to wear shoulder-straps!

CROMWELL.

'T will be most welcome.

MANASSEH.

I am overjoyed that Cromwell's fall so speedily doth make your fortune, master soldier!

CROMWELL.

Hypocrite!

MANASSEH.

At last, accursed Cromwell, thou dost expiate thy edict 'gainst the Jews! Fanatic! miser! hypocrite!

(To Cromwell.)

What ignominy! this protector, this usurping king did verify my reckoning. Talk not to me of crowned plebeians! To so circumscribed a circle are their minds confined! No gorgeous festivals, no games, no merry-makings, and no loans! What dealings one doth have with them! If one doth seize for them a Swedish brig, they fumble in his pockets, scrutinize his finger-ends, and leave him at the most, for all the risk the enterprise involved, three-quarters of the spoil.

CROMWELL.

Why that is flaying you outright!

MANASSEH.

Aye, that 's the word. Close-fisted kings! They know how to distinguish besants from sequins!

CROMWELL.

'T is past belief!

MANASSEH.

This Cromwell! Did he not at one time dare, forsooth, to lay a fine on me, because, by loaning at some paltry interest, I honestly did double my poor capital!

CROMWELL.

It was a crying shame!

MANASSEH.

'T is death to honest toil! In what doth not this tyrant interfere, I prithee? By what right doth he, to please his ranters, close all theatres and gaming-places, concerts, balls, horse-races, where the eldest sons of noble houses, given over to the life of pleasure there to be enjoyed, do ruin themselves gayly? Was it not unlawful to deprive them of that right? Vindictive, crafty, cruel, saving, niggardly, he is a very monster! Thanks to you, England doth breathe again. Your generous arm doth set her free from the worst tyrant hell could ever breed! I say not this to flatter you.

CROMWELL.

I am full sure of that.

MANASSEH (shrugging his shoulders, and looking askance at Cromwell, aside).

These war machines! this sordid heart rejoices in most nauseous flattery!

CROMWELL (aside).

How many masks that hateful face doth hide! I'll cause them all before my eyes to fall off, one by one.

(Aloud.)

I prithee, Jew, tell me my fortune.

MANASSEH.

I, foretell to you your future grandeur! Master corporal, you do me too much honor!

(Aside.)

Rascal of a soldier!

(Aloud.)

Fortune doth await you.

(Aside.)

'T is like looking at a candle through a telescope!

(Aloud.)

Be it as you will, fair sir; I will e'en cast your horoscope. 'T is what we call in polished Latin, making an experiment *in anima vili*.

(Aside.)

In Latin one may flout the ignoramus to his face.

(Aloud.)

Give me your hand. I needs must tell you . . . this infernal Cromwell, arrant rogue . . . (He scrutinizes by the light of his lantern the hand Cromwell offers him.)

What hand is this! I am a dead man!

(He falls prostrate at Cromwell's feet.)

CROMWELL (smiling).

How now, Jew, what dost thou there? Go to! what devil hath laid hold on thee?

MANASSEH (beating his head against the ground).

I am a dead man.

CROMWELL.

So thou knowest who I am, thou unclean Jew?

MANASSEH (in a weak voice).

Ah! 't is in sooth that palm, of ample width to bear the world! too well I recognize those lines, wherewith the stars do trace no other name than Cromwell's own. Your star lied not to me.

CROMWELL.

Hark ye, old man. Thou art a miserable villain; and I might, no doubt, by trying upon thee this polished steel, myself make an experiment *in anima vili*. But I do not with my own hand exterminate an earth-worm. Rise!

(Manasseh rises. Cromwell points to a stone bench near the gate.)

Sit there.

(The Jew takes his seat in the dark corner of the bench, as if dazed with terror.)

Remember first of all to hold thy peace. But one word, and thy soul will leave thy body and go hence, to finish at its ease thy dead men's alphabet!

(The Jew lets his head fall forward upon his breast. Cromwell returns to the front of the stage, and continues, with a sidelong glance at him.)

This Jew, serve Ormond! Fate, which doth send him to me, mingled a night-owl with yon birds of prey!

(He strides back and forth, uttering a few words from time to time.)

My only crimes, forsooth, if they 're to be believed, are that I bow not well enough, and count too well. But of Charles First, or Magna Charta, not a word!

(Putting his hand to the pocket of his doublet.)

What have I here that hampers me and weighs me down?

(He takes from his pocket the purse handed him by Murray.)

Ah! 't is the price of blood! I had forgotten that these gentlemen did pay me for the privilege of murdering me. Let us see if they 're entitled to my gratitude; aye, let us take account of their munificence. At what price do they reckon Cromwell's head? If they did pay me ill 't was most uncivil.

(He takes the lantern from Manasseh's hand, and throws the light upon the purse. He recoils with horror as he glances at it.)

God! my son's name worked upon this purse! So he is of this parricidal gold the source!

(He examines it more carefully.)

I do not err, here is his crest! What element is lacking now to prove his perfidy? Ah! wretched child! Ah! wretched father! Not content to have, in their vile haunt, his share in their conspiracies, his share in their carouse, to urge them on to strike, to drink to my demise, my son did pay the reckoning of the feast of death! He gave them gold wherewith to buy my head! In all their pleasures a confederate, without remorse, at last he paid them for my death, as for a banquet!

(He throws the purse on the ground with horror.)

E'en to parricide his reckless prodigality doth lead him on!

(Enters Richard Cromwell, trying to find his way in the darkness.)

But some one comes.

SCENE VI

THE SAME: RICHARD CROMWELL.

RICHARD CROMWELL (walking slowly toward the footlights).

The night is not as bright as noonday.

CROMWELL (unseen by him).

Can it be? my son!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

At last I am set free!

CROMWELL (aside).

And doubtless by the highwaymen, to whom thou didst betray me. Go clasp their bloody hands fraternally in thine!

RICHARD CROMWELL (still without seeing his father).

So much for having paid the sentry well.

CROMWELL (aside).

He doth confess it.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

I am free!

CROMWELL (aside).

At what a price, false knave?

RICHARD CROMWELL.

It costs me dear! but I do hate to be ungrateful.

CROMWELL (aside).

Ah! thou dost hate to be ungrateful to the vile miscreant, who leaves thee free to slay thy father at thy ease.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Another foolish prank!

CROMWELL (aside).

How lightly doth the recreant Joash speak of immolating me!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

My father is asleep, however!

CROMWELL (aside).

Aye, asleep!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

He harbors no suspicion.

CROMWELL (aside).

Nay, 't is he who 's wide awake, 't is he who listens to thee!

RICHARD CROMWELL (laughing).

I shall outwit him cleverly.

CROMWELL (aside).

What ghastly merriment and what a heinous sin! The perjured traitor comes to ask: "Is 't done?" Why should I not myself chastise him?

RICHARD CROMWELL (laughing).

Courage! When they find to-morrow that the bird has flown, how great will be the saints' discomfiture!

CROMWELL (aside).

Suppose I were to strike him down with my own hand?

(He draws his dagger, and takes a step toward Richard, who is walking to and fro before him near the front of the stage. He raises the dagger, then checks himself.)

He is my son!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

How heartily our cavaliers will laugh together at the exploit!

CROMWELL (*aside*).

By my soul, of my own blood he here doth make parade!

(*He takes a step forward.*)

Now let me strike!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

A lucky ending this, upon my word.

CROMWELL (*aside*).

Indeed?

RICHARD CROMWELL.

My father would not have forgiven me, I fear. But by this method I escape his wrath.

CROMWELL (*aside*).

Nay, thou shalt not escape it, traitor! I must strike. No pity! it is said.

(*He walks toward Richard once more, and once more hesitates.*)

But what! my eldest born! A happy day it was when God did send him to me. 'T is my blood this blade will find a-coursing through his veins! What a prolific source the child hath been to me of suffering, of

trouble and of pain, alas! aye, and of happiness! Whenever I appeared before him—suddenly, with beaming, joyful face, and holding out his tiny arms to my paternal hands, his little body shook from head to foot, as if the child had wings. And when he smiled on me, methought a star was shining in my eyes!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

I' faith, so much the worse for him. My father is a tyrant!

CROMWELL (*aside*).

Ah! that word doth end my hesitation. The son has ceased to be a son when he becomes a parricide.

(*He walks up behind his son and raises his dagger.*)

Die, traitor!

(*Footsteps are heard under the postern. Cromwell stops and turns about.*)

But what noise is this in yon dark corridors? 'T is Ormond and his cavaliers returning. I will watch the course of my son's perfidy among them; afterward, we will unravel the whole tragedy!

(*He replaces his dagger in its sheath. Enter the cavaliers, sword in hand, carrying in their midst Lord Rochester, asleep and gagged with a handkerchief which conceals his face.*)

SCENE VII

THE SAME: LORD ORMOND, LORD CLIFFORD, LORD DROGHEDA, LORD ROSEBERY, SIR PETER DOWNIE, SIR WILLIAM MURRAY, SEDLEY, DOCTOR JENKINS, LORD ROCHESTER.

(As the cavaliers enter, Cromwell resumes his former position, and Richard turns around in amazement.)

RICHARD CROMWELL (unseen by the cavaliers).

Methinks these gentry have a most suspicious look. I will conceal myself.

(He retires among the trees at the left of the stage.)

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (to Cromwell, with an air of triumph).

This Lord Protector hath not even brocade hangings to his bed! Upon his table was a wretched candle at the point of death; one could not see one's self. Thanks to his lethargy he did not stir when we laid hands on him. We gagged him without noise and here he is.

CROMWELL.

Ah! this is he?

RICHARD CROMWELL (aside).

What does this mean?

LORD CLIFFORD.

At last we have him. Victory!

RICHARD CROMWELL (aside).

What does he say?

SIR PETER DOWNIE.

The worst is done!—the night is very dark; come! let us lose no time. Forward!

(To Drogheda, Rosebery, Sedley and Clifford, who are carrying the sleeping Rochester, and who have halted.)

Well, what 's the matter?

LORD ROSEBERY (to Downie).

'T is a simple thing to say for him who bears no burden.

SEDLEY (to Downie).

As we 've no relays ere we attain our destined goal, we must take time to breathe.

RICHARD CROMWELL (aside).

I recognize those voices.

LORD ORMOND (with his eyes fixed upon the burden which the cavaliers have placed upon the ground).

So that is Cromwell! Of his most monstrous crime behold the solemn chastisement! The glorified leviathan, in whom, more than in God, the world seemed to have faith, is in our power! 'T is himself! Here at our feet, what station doth he occupy? There 's none so strong, there 's none so subtle, as henceforth to rescue this great culprit from his judge. Before him the whole world did flee;—now lies he there defenseless. Ah! ill-fated soldier! Wherein hath it served thee to have held a nation fifteen years in subjection, to have fought so many battles, pierced so many bucklers, substituted thy name for the name of the old dynasties, and reigned by hatred, fear and horror,—and to have made of Whitehall a king's Calvary? Ah! what a fearful burden are these crimes of thine, sealed with the diadem, at this dread

hour! Cromwell! what account hast thou to render, and how wilt thou bear thyself? I did abhor thee powerful, o'erthrown I pity thee! Alas! that I might not have laid thee low in battle! What a fall! To take thee without overcoming thee! a victory without a struggle! We must be content. The sword is superseded by the dagger. 'T is a mighty head that fate doth cast into the scales to weigh them down in favor of the Stuarts!

RICHARD CROMWELL (aside).

What light is this that breaks upon me? I will listen still, and hold my peace.

CROMWELL (aside).

I do esteem this Ormond. Nobly doth he speak. The heart of a true soldier ne'er belies itself.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (to Lord Ormond, pointing to the prisoner).

Your Grace doth do the villain too much honor!

CROMWELL (aside).

Servile courtier!

DOWNIE (to those who carry the prisoner).

Damnation! forward!

LORD DROGHEDA.

One moment, in God's name! He is as heavy even now as if he were already dead.

SEDLAY.

It is no easy task to bring this cargo safely into port. Let us deliberate. What shall we do with him?

LORD CLIFFORD.

Let 's kill our man upon the spot, and make an end on 't.

LORD DROGHEDA.

So say I! Let 's kill him!

SEDLAY.

'T is the swiftest way.

RICHARD CROMWELL (aside).

What demons' counsel! Who can be the prisoner?

CROMWELL (aside).

The harpoon is well fixed; now let us pay out line.

MANASSEH (who has thus far observed events in profound silence, raising his head, aside).

This spectacle doth dull the edge of the calamity that overwhelms me. They will soon be killing one another; 't is, at all events, a consolation!

LORD CLIFFORD (to the cavaliers, brandishing his sword over Rochester's head).

Is it agreed?

DOCTOR JENKINS (holding Clifford back).

How now, my lords! without a judge, or witnesses, or verdict of a jury—without form of law? 'T is downright murder! 'T is a harsh word; but are you, pray, by special precept, authorized to sit as a court-martial or a court of justice? Where are your commissions, under the great seal, that we may know the law's not set at naught? Which is judge-advocate? and which is president? I see not here two advocates to plead, one for the crown, the other for th' accused. In fine, what have we here of all the safeguards of the law? Of Latin do you know enough to try the cause? confront the witnesses with the accused and question them? in formal phrase pronounce the judgment that condemns the culprit to the hurdle or the gallows? What day of your session have you reached? How will you date the sentence? The *corpus delicti*,—what is that? and where are all the complices? Upon what charges do you base the penalty? I speak here to uphold the laws, not Cromwell. Him I consider guilty, though untried; he was unmindful of his sworn allegiance to his lord and king; a case

anticipated by the law, which in its righteous vengeance smites the man, *qui laedit in rege majestatem Dei*. In short, the laws of England he hath disobeyed, and 't is most fitting that, in order to attest their sacred majesty with greater emphasis, the felon's head be severed from the trunk; but in accordance with the forms of law, my lords, you cannot thus condemn him. You do take upon you functions which are never joined. To constitute one's self witness and prosecutor, to be judge and executioner at once, is an unheard of thing; and my voice doth hereby, in the law's name, protest against this crime!

CROMWELL (aside).

Ah! there spoke Jenkins, the upright magistrate!

LORD CLIFFORD (shrugging his shoulders, to the cavaliers).

The devil! what was that he said in his shrill voice?

LORD DROGHEDA (to Jenkins, with a wounded air).

Doctor! methinks you take us for a pack of pettifogging lawyers.

DOWNIE.

Think you that you 're holding court in the King's Bench?

SEDLEV (laughing).

Since when hath the night-owl been wont to say to the goshawk:

(Mimicking Jenkins's voice and gestures.)

"Let us hold court and try the viper!"

LORD ROSEBERY (laughing).

He doth talk Latin to us!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

A murrain on his asinine harangue!

LORD CLIFFORD.

My dagger is the court to try the cause, a court of last resort! Now let us strike!

CROMWELL (aside).

Now let us let them strike.

ALL THE CAVALIERS.

Let us have done with it.

(Lord Clifford leads the way with uplifted sword toward the prisoner, who is still veiled.)

JENKINS (solemnly).

I do protest.

RICHARD CROMWELL (aside).

God! what a fearful scene! is it a ghastly nightmare?

LORD CLIFFORD (waving Jenkins aside).

To your heart's content protest!

LORD ORMOND (detaining Clifford).

One moment, my Lord Clifford! I do most heartily commend the doctor's words. The king doth most explicitly command me to deliver our captive to him living; you must needs abide by that command.

LORD CLIFFORD.

But in that case we shall be forced to fight a hundred fights to-morrow ere we bring him safely off.

SIR PETER DOWNIE.

And when he shall be over yonder, living, prithee doth the king propose to place him duly ticketed in his menagerie?

LORD DROGHEDA.

Eh! we will present him with the animal all stuffed.

LORD CLIFFORD (to Ormond).

My lord, when once the blade has flashed from out the scabbard we must strike. We have but this brief moment to ourselves; let

us avail ourselves of it. Cromwell is in our hands, so let him die!

ALL THE CAVALIERS (except Ormond and Jenkins).

Yes, yes!

(They rush forward together, with drawn swords, upon the still motionless prisoner.)

JENKINS (solemnly).

I do protest!

RICHARD CROMWELL (aside, intensely agitated).

They mean to kill my father; God in heaven!

(He rushes into the midst of the cavaliers.)

Back, assassins!

ALL THE CAVALIERS.

God! 't is Richard Cromwell!

CROMWELL (aside).

What doth he?

RICHARD CROMWELL (to the cavaliers).

Stand back! In pity's name, if there be any trace remaining of our friendship in your hearts, pray listen to me, Sedley, Downie, Rosebery!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (impatiently).

The devil!

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Spare my father!

SEDLEY.

Did he spare his king?

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Ah! why say that to me? doubtless it was a crime; but am I guilty of it? should I be the victim? Friends, in smiting him, you smite me too!

CROMWELL (aside).

Can that be Richard, the unfeeling paricide? I can make nothing of it all.

LORD ROSEBERY (to Richard).

We love you like a brother, Richard, but one's duty must be done.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Nay, nay! you shall not kill my father!

CROMWELL (aside).

He defends me! ah! what happiness! I did misjudge my child.

RICHARD CROMWELL (to the cavaliers).

Was it to this abominable end that you made Richard welcome at your board? that we partook of everything together, gaming, pleasures and debauchery? and that my purse-strings always were unloosed at your desire? Now, my boon companions, pray compare that I have done for you with that you do to me!

LORD ROSEBERY (in an undertone to the cavaliers).

Is he not right?

JENKINS (to Richard).

Well said, young man! i' faith, not badly put! But pray insist upon the radical defect of the whole matter. They have not the right. Speak out and plead the cause; plead! plead!

RICHARD CROMWELL (to Jenkins).

Sir!

JENKINS.

I with you antagonize . . .

RICHARD CROMWELL (to the cavaliers, clasping his hands).

My friends!

CROMWELL (aside).

I see the whole affair with clearer vision. Ah! my son! how bitterly unjust I was in his regard! Certes, he knew no more of this infernal project than the part that did consist in drinking deep.

LORD ORMOND (to Richard).

Your father played for heavy stakes with us; each one was playing for his head, and he has lost.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Great Heaven! to assassinate the father before his son's very eyes!

(He shouts at the top of his voice.)

Murder!

(To the cavaliers.)

I have no hope save in myself alone.

(He shouts again.)

Help, soldiers! murder! help!

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (interrupting him).

The soldiers are with us.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

So be it! I, alone, will face you all!

(He puts his hand to his side to draw his sword.)

How now! the avenging sword is wanting to my disappointed hand! Why, father, didst thou take my sword from me?

CROMWELL (aside).

Poor Richard!

LORD ORMOND (to Richard).

Sir, my heart doth bleed for you. Take my advice—withdraw. Leave the king's men to work their will.

RICHARD CROMWELL.

Leave you to work your will; O Heaven! I do ask no mercy at your hands. Kill me with him, my arms about his body.

(He rushes to the sleeping Rochester and throws his arms about him.)

CROMWELL (aside).

My dear son! he goes too far; 't would be too hard that he should meet his death for a false Cromwell.

LORD ROSEBERY (trying to soothe Richard).

Richard!

RICHARD CROMWELL (still clinging to Rochester).

Nay! strike me dead with your unfeeling swords, or I will save his life!

(The cavaliers try to tear Richard away from Rochester's body; he resists them and clings to it the more strenuously. During the struggle Cromwell watches closely every movement of the cavaliers, as if ready to rush to his son's assistance. Manasseh raises his head, and looks on attentively without speaking.)

LORD ROCHESTER (awaking with a start and joining in the struggle).

You strangle me! deuce take you!

LORD ORMOND.

God! what voice is that?

(Lord Rochester snatches away the handkerchief from his face, and at the same moment Cromwell turns the light upon it from the dark lantern.)

RICHARD CROMWELL (recoiling).

The spy!

ALL THE CAVALIERS.

Lord Rochester!

LORD ROCHESTER (to Richard).

You are the executioner? You strangle me, my friend, upon my word, as if I had two lives to lose! Cannot you go about your task more gently, keep in good humor with the sufferer, and hang a man, in short, without so tightly squeezing him?

LORD ORMOND (in consternation).

What! Rochester!

LORD ROCHESTER (half awake, and feeling of the handkerchief about his neck).

The cord is round my neck; but how is this? I see no gallows. Would they hang me to a rusty nail, like a screech-owl?

LORD ORMOND.

But where is Cromwell?

CROMWELL (drawing himself up, and in a voice of thunder).

He is here! Forth from your tents, O Jacob! Israel, forth from your tents!

(At Cromwell's call, the astonished cavaliers turn, and see at the back of the stage a multitude of soldiers with torches, appearing from every corner of the garden, and from all the doors of the palace. In their midst can be seen Thurlow and Lord Carlisle. All the windows of the palace are suddenly lighted, and discover armed soldiers in every room. Cromwell, with drawn sword, stands out prominently against this dazzling background.)

SCENE VIII

THE SAME: EARL OF CARLISLE, THURLOW, MUSKETEERS, HALBERDIERS, GENTLEMEN, CROMWELL'S BODY-GUARDS.

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY (in dismay).

Cromwell! soldiers everywhere! and gleaming arms! I am a dead man!

THE CAVALIERS.

Treason!

LORD ORMOND (glancing from Rochester to the protector).

Cromwell! and Rochester!

LORD ROCHESTER (rubbing his eyes).

Am I already hanged? am I in hell? Yon palace all ablaze with light, these ghosts, these hordes of demons waving flaming torches; yes, 't is hell! for Wilmot had but little hope of heaven.

(Looking at the protector.)

Aye, and yonder 's Satan; he doth much resemble Cromwell!

CROMWELL (to Thurlow and Lord Carlisle, pointing to the cavaliers).

Arrest these gentlemen!

(A crowd of soldiers rush upon the cavaliers, seize them, and take their swords before they have had time to resist.)

LORD ORMOND (breaking his sword across his knee).

No man shall have my sword.

RICHARD CROMWELL (aside).

What means all this? My latest prank will bring down on my head some new reprisal. I have broke prison; I am lost.

LORD ROCHESTER (gazing around with a bewildered air).

Why here are Rosebery, Drogheda, Downie! surely I shall simmer in good company! How now! the Jew Manasseh who paid Clifford's ransom! Doubtless they will cook him in his own strong-box. Meseems we all are dead and damned!

(To the cavaliers.)

Good-morrow, friends! Come, flout we Satan who convokes us here; let 's give the devil hell, and mock him to his face!

LORD ORMOND.

By what a fatal lure we are entrapped!

LORD ROCHESTER (to the cavaliers).

Our grand designs have met with ill success; Cromwell hath drugged our wine with water from Cocytus.

(Cromwell thus far has enjoyed his triumph in silence, standing with folded arms, and haughtily eyeing the confused and desperate cavaliers.)

CROMWELL (aside, glancing at Ormond).

I knew not Ormond. His appearance doth compel respect.

LORD ORMOND (with his eyes fixed upon Cromwell).

How he hath cozened us! a clever, daring stratagem!

CROMWELL (aside).

Ormond alone dares still to look me in the face. He is a noble foe! He had a mission,

he but sought to execute it. I will accost this gallant warrior.

(He walks toward Ormond and eyes him proudly.)

(Aloud.)

Thy name?

LORD ORMOND.

Bloum . . .

(Aside.)

Dying, I do not choose that he shall know that he was Ormond's master.

CROMWELL (aside).

He doth hide his name from pride.

(Aloud.)

What art thou?

LORD ORMOND.

Naught but a subject in revolt against thee for old England and his Majesty.

CROMWELL.

What dost thou think of me?

LORD ORMOND.

Of thee, Cromwell?

CROMWELL.

Say on.

LORD ORMOND.

A many things that can be written only with the sword.

CROMWELL.

Convincing argument! in which there 's but one flaw; 't is this, that now and then the scaffold doth make answer to the dagger.

LORD ORMOND.

What care I?

CROMWELL (folding his arms).

In this pursuit the thirst for blood did guide thee?

LORD ORMOND.

I came to deal out justice to the regicide with the cold steel.

CROMWELL.

Thou deal out justice! by what law?

LORD ORMOND.

The law of blow for blow.

CROMWELL.

And dar'st thou force thy way into the lion's den?

LORD ORMOND.

The tiger's thou wouldst say.

CROMWELL.

The very spot where the protector dwells?

LORD ORMOND.

I prithee, Cromwell, say the regicide.

CROMWELL.

The regicide! always that word. 'T is their sole argument, put forth on all occasions, in and out of season! In good sooth have I deserved this name of regicide! The people would have none of an illegal tax; I was upright and stern, Charles most imprudent. His downfall was a blessing, his death an accident. Virtues he had, and I did venerate them. In a word, my duty bade me smite the king, while praying for the man.

LORD ORMOND.

Out on thee, hypocrite! Thou canst not hoodwink me.

CROMWELL.

We differ in opinion on this point, I find.

LORD ORMOND.

A place by Ravaillac is kept for thee!

CROMWELL.

Thy heart by hatred is borne on too far, old man! thy gray locks should inspire thee to wiser thoughts. Cromwell a Ravaillac! Canst thou compare the hand that moves the world to that plebeian hand, the axe of a whole

nation to a paid assassin's knife? From heaven and hell we come to the same point: the deed of blood shed lustre upon Samuel, and branded Cain.

LORD ORMOND.

But hath not Ravaillac, of execrable memory, all that one needs must have to share thy great renown? Like thee he caused the death of a just king. What doth he lack?

CROMWELL.

He struck too low. A king should ne'er be struck below the head.

LORD ORMOND.

O Charles! O my beloved master! he in all his glory doth appear before me!

(Waving Cromwell back.)

Once again I say, avaunt! O thou whose hand assailed the majesty of an anointed king!

CROMWELL.

Go to; blood sometimes soils, and sometimes purifies.

(Aside.)

How now! he doth accuse me and I justify myself! I let him flaunt his idiotic virtue and his fool's honor with unbended knee! His conscience knows not to what heights the tyrant destiny doth sometimes carry genius. Enough of this incorrigible madman!

(He turns his back upon Ormond, and accosts Jenkins.)

Eh! what! Doctor Jenkins.

(Pointing to Ormond and Murray.)

You, among these lunatics!

(Pointing to Sedley, Clifford and Rochester.)

Among these rascals! you, the wise man and the just?

DOCTOR JENKINS (gravely).

Aye, you can speak thus with impunity, and worse perchance.

CROMWELL.

You, Jenkins, have preferred to my goodwill and favor the honor of sharing with these dreamers a punishment that needs must be made exemplary.

DOCTOR JENKINS.

By your leave, friend Cromwell, let us draw the line. You may avenge yourself, you may not punish us. 'T is well in everything to fix the meaning of the words one uses. *Tyrannus non iudex*, the tyrant's not a judge. Though, thanks to the connivance of some traitor or some renegade, you have been more successful in the struggle—though you have the force,—the right is on our side. You may by force and arms deprive us of the safeguards of the law; what matters it? We die, 't is true, but die an arbitrary death, *de facto* only! On this point consult your own law officers, Whitelocke, Pierpoint and Maynard. I am content to take the judgment of your own advisers thereupon, albeit Whitelocke doth affect a most mistaken system, while Pierpoint and Maynard frequently do plead in favor of the fox against the poultry-yard.

CROMWELL.

Ah well! the gibbet shall your portion be.

DOCTOR JENKINS.

So be it. But how great is our advantage over you! For we shall suffer on the gibbet of an angry despot, you on the pillory of posterity!

(Cromwell shrugs his shoulders.)

LORD ROCHESTER (still but half awake).

Where are my wits in God's name? An I sleep not, certes I am dead. But Cromwell doth confuse me sadly. Here so soon! I left him yesterday on earth.

(To the soldiers who surround him.)

Might one not change one's dream, or else one's hell? Deliver me from Noll! You seem a jovial lot of devils.

CROMWELL (after a moment's meditation, folding his arms, and addressing the cavaliers with smiling face).

Look you, you did meditate a most incredible design! To capture Oliver Cromwell in a child's trap, and murder him! For your triumphant daggers, gentlemen, would not, before this gate, have treated me as David in the cave did treat King Saul; not one of you would have confined the functions of his knife to gently clipping my cloak's hem, I know full well. 'T is very plain, and I commend you for it. But, to tell the truth, methinks your project might have been a thought more shrewdly laid, that 't was, in fine, of much too thin a web. Unluckily I knew it not in time, my brethren, to make known to you my views thereon; I prithee bear me no ill-will. You labored manfully in the devising! I, like Joshua, whom the combined assault of twenty kings did scarce disturb, have cut the hamstrings of your war-horses. We all have acted even as we should have done; you to attack, I to defend myself. As for your project in itself, I do confess that I admire such impulsive outbursts of the heart that immolates itself on duty's altar; courage makes me smile, and recklessness of danger doth rejoice my soul. Albeit your success was incomplete, I place you no less high in my esteem for that. Your hearts are moved by fervid sentiment; you march on boldly with a firm, unwavering step; you did not bend the knee, or tremble, or turn pale; you are,—accept my heartfelt compliments,—the enemies I would have

chosen, foemen worthy of my steel; I see naught in your action to arouse disdain, and do, in fact, esteem you far too much—to spare you. This esteem doth seek occasion to display itself in public, and I do bear witness thereunto by having you all hanged. No thanks! Forgive me rather that I do associate with you on the same scaffold,

(Pointing to the terrified Murray.)

this weeping blusterer, this dastard who doth listen to my words, albeit he 's not worth the rope he costs me. He should give thanks to you; aye, by my faith he should! for but for you he 'd not have had the honor to arouse my wrath.

(Pointing to Manasseh, who has not moved.)

Bear with me if I also join with you, you nauseous Jew. 'T is hard I know, to mingle deicides with Christians; a Barabbas with good, honest thieves! I will arrange the matter. We will hang him lower down. Now, one and all, I pray you pardon me for that I do so ill requite you; what I have, I give. This that I do for you, I know full well is very little! Go! prepare yourselves to settle your accounts with God. We are all sinners, brethren! But a few brief hours hence, when dawning day these walls shall whiten, you will all be hanged! Go. Pray for me.

(The guards, with Lord Carlisle at their head, lead away the prisoners, all of whom, with the exception of Murray and the Jew, maintain a haughty and disdainful demeanor. Cromwell stands lost in thought for a few moments, then suddenly turns to Thurlow.)

Cause everything to be made ready at Westminster! I am king!

(He returns to Whitehall through the postern, and Thurlow, with a low bow goes off by way of the park.)

SCENE IX

THE FOUR JESTERS.

(As Cromwell and Thurlow leave the stage, Gramadoch puts his head out of the hiding-place, then comes forth cautiously, peering about on all sides to see if the stage is really deserted, and motions to his companions to follow him. The four jesters, having all come out upon the stage, look from one to another with roars of laughter.)

GRAMADOCH.

Well! what say you to it all?

GIRAFFE (laughing).

'T is more and more absurd.

ELESPURU.

A scene from the other world performed in this.

TRICK.

'T is something strange, mad, farcical.

GIRAFFE.

A most astounding and diverting spectacle. To see Cromwell stripped naked! fire without smoke, Beelzebub without his mask!

GRAMADOCH.

'Mongst all the actors in this grotesque drama, which is the maddest? Come, let us award the prize.

TRICK.

'T is Murray, who, while crushing Cromwell with his lofty scorn, turns in a somersault from Noll to Charles, and for his standard takes a weather-cock.

GIRAFFE.

The palm is due to Richard, son of Belial, dying for Rochester through filial affection.

TRICK.

'T would have been well done, had Cromwell killed him in his madness.

GIRAFFE.

True; but 't would have ended the performance.

TRICK.

More 's the pity!

GRAMADOCH.

So you do award to Richard the fool's cap of honor, the pre-eminence in our profession?

ELESPURU.

I prefer the learned pedantry of Jenkins.

TRICK.

And Ormond preaching high morality to Cromwell! Was it not amusing? For my part, I would much prefer to teach a lawyer justice, comb a polar bear, or milk a panther, or sweep down the crater of red-hot Vesuvius.

GIRAFFE.

And the Jew dog, who 's not the least diverting character! the Hebrew necromancer, usurer and spy, who, meditating on the charms of his piasters, comes with his lantern to consult the stars!

ELESPURU.

Amphibious beast, at home in neither camp, the Jew came hither like a bat that flies about among the shadows of a tomb.

GIRAFFE.

By so much the more apt is the comparison, that Noll will have him nailed up like a fan upon a cross before some door.

TRICK.

Thus Cromwell doth chastise the braggadocio of the cavaliers! He has more ropes than one, friends, to his gallows.

GRAMADOCH.

Even so, although he bears the world about his neck, of those of whom we speak the most insane is Cromwell. He would fain be king, but death is at his door.

(These words attract the attention of the jesters, and they hastily gather about Gramadoch.)

GIRAFFE (to Gramadoch).

What mean you?

GRAMADOCH.

You will see.

TRICK (to Gramadoch).

But tell us, pray . . .

GRAMADOCH.

Anon.

ELESURU (to Gramadoch).

What matters it to thee?

GRAMADOCH.

A mystery's an egg—mark well, I pray you—that one must not break, if one would have a chicken. Wait. This Cromwell, for whom everything doth seem auspicious, hurls himself over the precipice by taking this last step. There death awaits him. Fail not to attend his coronation; you will see, and you will laugh! Cromwell in very truth is far more mad than all these pygmies he doth crush upon his passage; a hundred times more mad in that he deems himself the wisest of all men.

TRICK.

To close the conclave, the most mad of all in this affair, Cromwell included, gentlemen, are we ourselves. For are we otherwise to squander precious time we might employ in doing nothing, sleeping, singing to echo of our weariness, or gazing at the moon from some deep well?

(Exeunt.)



E. Bordes -

B. Bordes inv.

L. Monyès sc.



ACT FIFTH

THE WORKMEN

THE GREAT HALL OF WESTMINSTER

At the left, toward the back of the stage, the great door of the hall seen obliquely. At the rear, semi-circular steps rising to a considerable height. Rich hangings of tapestry fill the spaces between the Gothic pillars all around the hall, and leave only the capitals and cornices visible. At the right the frame of the steps leading to the platform of a throne, covered with boards. As the curtain rises several workmen are at work ; some nailing the last boards upon the steps, while the others cover them with a rich carpet of scarlet velvet with gold fringe, or busy themselves suspending above the platform a canopy of the same material and color, on the under side of which the protector's arms are worked in gold. Various carpenters' and upholsterers' tools are scattered over the floor, and ladders placed against the pillars indicate that the work of arranging the hangings is but just completed. Facing the throne, a pulpit. Everything about the hall, galleries and railings, richly draped. It is three o'clock in the morning ; day is just breaking, and the first rays of dawn, shining horizontally through the windows and half-opened door, pale the light of several copper lamps with five burners, which are placed or hung at different points to light the workmen at their nocturnal labors.

SCENE I

THE WORKMEN

THE MASTER WORKMAN (encouraging with gestures the men who are adjusting the canopy).

The work goes bravely on. Well done ! The canopy is broad enough.

(To another workman who stands near with a Bible in his hand.)

My brother, edify us ! read.

THE WORKMAN (reading).

“ And he built the walls of the house within with boards of cedar, and covered the floor of the house with planks of fir . . . ”

THE MASTER.

Brethren, let us feed on this celestial manna.

THE READER (continuing).

"And within the oracle he made two cherubims of olive tree, each ten cubits high. And for the entering of the oracle he made doors of olive tree; the lintel and side posts were a fifth part of the wall. So also made he for the door of the temple posts of olive tree, a fourth part of the wall."

A WORKMAN (glancing at the preparations).

Our hands to-night have labored to good purpose. Solomon, to leave behind him more enduring monuments, was seven years building his great temple, thirteen his own palace. We, in all these preparations, have employed but one short hour.

THE MASTER.

Well said, Enoch.

(To the workmen arranging the canopy.)

Stay, this ladder is the better one . . .

(To Enoch.)

Can one make too great haste . . .

(To the workmen who are hanging the curtains of the canopy.)

Good, at that height! . . .

(To Enoch.)

when one doth build a throne for my lord protector?

A SECOND WORKMAN.

Will the ceremony then take place to-day?

THE MASTER.

Yes. Luckily the platform 's well-nigh finished.

(To Enoch.)

Ne'er have we . . .

(To the workmen who are hammering nails in the boards.)

Less noise, you knaves!

(To Enoch.)

done aught so hurriedly as this, unless upon that other night . . .

ENOCH.

What night was that?

THE MASTER.

You have forgotten,—aye, 't was eight long years ago,—a cold, dark night, the night of January twenty-ninth and thirtieth? Then too we were at work for my lord Oliver.

THE SECOND WORKMAN.

Did we not build King Charles's scaffold on the night you name?

THE MASTER.

Aye, Tom. But do we speak thus of the royal Barabbas, the English Pharaoh?

ENOCH (as if searching his memory).

I have it now. The scaffold was placed close against the palace. Ah! that was no coarse, rough-hewn affair, fit to hang rabbis and burn witches on; but a black scaffold, and well built, as was becoming. 'T was on a level with a window. No ladder to descend. Oh! it was most convenient!

THE MASTER.

And strong enough to bear all Herod's children! Robin could have found no stancher beams. There one could die and fear no accident.

TOM (upon the platform).

This throne is not so strong; it trembles when one steps upon it.

ENOCH.

Methinks the scaffold was not built so hastily.

THE WORKMAN (who has the Bible, shaking his head).

It was not finished, brother, on that night.

ENOCH.

How so?

THE WORKMAN (pointing to the throne).

This stage is part and parcel of the scaffold. 'T is a step the more, wherefrom Cromwell may lord it over us. The structure then begun, to-day is finished; Stuart's scaffold is made perfect by this throne.

TOM.

Ah! Nahum the Inspired sees things from a higher plane.

NAHUM (with his eyes fixed upon the throne).

Aye, truss for truss, I liked the other better. Then 't was Charles's turn; to-day 't is ours. Cromwell on the black cloth did immolate the king alone; upon this purple he will slay the people!

THE MASTER (to Nahum).

What! you dare speak thus! Someone may overhear you.

NAHUM.

What care I? In sackcloth I am clad. For Cromwell's sake, moreover, would that he might hear me. If he would be chosen king, down with him! he's accursed. I do foretell his death, yes I, poor, miserable creature that I am, but worthier than he, in all his execrable glory; for the Lord to Tyre did prefer the desert, the grapes of Ephraim to Abiezer's vine!

THE MASTER (to Nahum, whose excitement does not abate).

Rash man!

(To Enoch.)

It still remains to place upon the platform the great chair of State. Assist me, comrade.

(They mount the steps together, carrying a large arm-chair, heavily gilded, and displaying upon the back the protector's arms in gold in high relief. They place the chair in the middle of the platform.)

TOM (looking at the royal seat).

Truly 't is a noble chair! Right kingly will he be therein.

ENOCH (to the master-workman, when the chair is in position).

The night of which you speak, methinks 't was I who did arrange for Charles a pretty oaken block, all furnished with its hold-fasts and its double chain; quite new it was, and had been used for none but my Lord Strafford.

A THIRD WORKMAN.

Tell me who it was that came to bid us ply our hammers with less force?

THE MASTER.

'T was Tomlinson, the colonel of the guard. He bade us not begin the torture ere 't was time, and said that the ear-splitting din our hammers made disturbed the culprit in his last sound sleep.

NAHUM.

He slept! 't was strange.

A FOURTH WORKMAN.

At such a ghostly hour, if one of us had seen a band of phantoms in the darkness building a scaffold by torchlight, like grave-diggers, or like those demons who, by hellish art, do rear infernal structures in a single night, i' faith he would have been well terrified!

ENOCH.

I do much like this night-work; 't is well paid. With my ten children, creatures to be fed, I lived for two full weeks upon that scaffold.

A FIFTH WORKMAN.

We shall see if Oliver will do as he should do; if he will pay as freely for the throne as for the scaffold.

TOM.

'T is to Master Barbones, the upholsterer, to him alone, and not to us, that this affair is

profitable; he provides these curtains and these chairs and this brocade, and of our wages he will take three-fourths.

NAHUM.

He is a money-changer of the temple!

THE FIFTH WORKMAN.

A Mede!

THE FOURTH WORKMAN.

A worthy son of Eve, who blindly walks upon the keen edge of the sword!

NAHUM.

And who, a pillar of the arch, a buttress of the Tower of Babel, stands with one foot in hell, the other in heaven!

TOM.

Hush! he would dismiss us, should he come to know that we do treat him as he treats his master. Here he comes; hold we our peace.

(Enters Barebones. All the workmen silently resume their labors. Nahum alone stands motionless with his eyes fixed upon the old worn Bible which he holds open in his hand.)

SCENE II

THE SAME: BAREBONES.

BAREBONES (glancing at the work of his men).

The work is well advanced . . .

(To the workmen.)

I am content with you. Naught now remains to do, in very truth!

(Aside.)

I do most heartily rejoice that they thus early have completed this degrading structure. Our conspirators, who will be here anon, may now take counsel undisturbed and without witnesses, take note of the surroundings, and consider how most surely Noll may be struck down in all his pride. How fortunate, the better to gain access to the ill-starred autocrat, that I am titular upholsterer to this same antichrist! Let me dismiss them all, and quickly . . .

(Aloud to the workmen.)

Go, my brethren; ever be on guard against the tempter. Love your neighbor, even though he be an evil-doer.

(To the master-workman.)

Master Nehemiah!

(The master-workman approaches Barebones while the others are picking up their tools, and taking down the lamps and ladders.)

This cuirass of Toledo leather must without delay be finished for my lord protector, God be with him.

(In an undertone, putting his mouth to the other's ear.)

Of the leather that remains, far from all prying eyes, make sheaths to fit the daggers of our saints.

(The master-workman bows in token of assent, and goes off with all his fellows.)

SCENE III

BAREBONES (alone).

(He takes his stand in an attitude of contemplation before the throne.)

Behold the throne! the execrable fabric, whereon Cromwell doth to Nesroch offer us in sacrifice, whereon this chieftain, many years blessed, doth transform himself into a king, whereon the fox, restored to youth, doth change his skin! Thereon he doth rely as the main buttress of his empire, this false Zerubbabel, in whom Nimrod doth live again; this priest of hell; this diabolic poisoner, who, prostituting to his own vile ends the church of God, doth darkly plot in his o'erweening pride to make of the saints' spouse his concubine; this bold oppressor of his God, betrayed by his own heart; this man, in short, more vile than Shethar-boznai! Behold his impious throne full laden with anathema! Aye, there it stands; six feet in height and nine in width; and all with scarlet velvet draped. To clothe it thus ten packages were used. This son of blasphemy is not content, forsooth, to wield authority usurped from God himself; to trample Israel beneath his feet like a dried reed; a greedy Titan, lying upon Europe, more powerful and more redoubtable than Adonibezec, to have of kings three-score feeding upon the crumbs that fall beneath his table! No, but he must have a throne. And such a throne! A mass of fringes, feathers, satin, damask, wherein, as it was written of the consecrated lampard, the sculptor's and

the lapidary's art do join! And Cromwell fain would be surrounded with this tinsel. ('T is good, honest gold though I do call it tinsel!) Virgin gold of Hungary—these gorgeous tassels, too, would pay the cost of four republics! I did furnish them, and were they of less size, their tawdry splendor would deface the velvet. Spanish velvet! Let him reign, but let him die! Aye, let the crown adorn his latest hour! On his brow we will make trial of the nail of Sisera.

(His eye falls upon the cushions of the throne.)

Velvet for which I paid five piasters the yard! According to the ancient custom I will sell for ten. Nathless this Ehud is a customer well worth the having. But his avarice! His death is near at hand. These royal steps will break beneath his feet, beneath this gorgeous canopy, beneath these very hangings whereupon his upstart 'scutcheon doth usurp a diadem. How well adapted is this spot to strike him down!

(He walks back and forth in front of the throne, and his expression changes from rage to admiration for the magnificence of its decoration.)

But he is capable e'en now of chaffering! of causing Maynard to pare down my bill! clipping the gold brocade, and crying down the silk! And, if I dare complain, in his good faith he sends his men of war to bear aid to his men of law. Ah! who would serve these Pharaohs? ingratitude is the first habit

of their frozen hearts. And yet he well may be content with me ! This execrable throne, this hideous stage, this unclean altar, to parody the majesty of a great king do nothing lack. Aye, 't is magnificent ! In sooth I have spared naught. I did submit to decorate this Moloch, and expose to all the risks that follow the anathema my Turkish carpets, and my leather from Bohemia. The Jebusite ! Down with him !

(As if a thought had suddenly come to him.)

Even so, but who will pay me when he is no more ? The august Deborah left not the nail in the ungodly captain's brow ; naught Samson ventured when his slumbering strength awoke and leveled with the ground a temple filled to overflowing with his enemies ;

and Judith, too, who triumphed o'er the sleeping Holofernes, fleeing, in rich attire, from the bloody feast, did save her head, nor lost a single gem. But who will be my guaranty ? what real profit shall I reap from Cromwell's death to compensate my loss ? Must I not leave a trifle to my widow ? Thus put forth, methinks the question is quite new. I must take thought thereon ! But here are our good friends the saints.

(Enter the Puritan conspirators, Lambert at their head. All are closely wrapped in ample cloaks, and wear tall cone-shaped hats with very broad brims pulled down over their stern and threatening faces. They come upon the stage slowly, as if deeply absorbed in thought. Several of them are muttering prayers. Dagger-hilts can be seen glistening beneath their partly opened cloaks.)

SCENE IV

BAREBONES, LAMBERT, JOYCE, OVERTON, PLINLIMMON, HARRISON, WILDMAN, LUDLOW, SYNDERCOMB, PIMPLETON, PALMER, GARLAND, PRIDE, JEROBOAM DEMER, and other roundhead conspirators.

LAMBERT (to Barebones).

How now ?

(Barebones, in reply, waves his hand toward the throne and its decorations of royal splendor, at which the conspirators cast angry glances. Lambert turns toward them, and continues gravely.)

You see it. Faithful to his purpose, brethren, Cromwell doth pursue his hellish course. Westminster is made ready, and the throne is reared ; and yonder are the steps whereon the fawning Parliament will swear allegiance to an Oliver ! Pray let us profit by the moment that remains to us to act and sit in judgment on this other king. His crime is manifest, for yonder is his throne !

OVERTON.

Nay. Yonder is his scaffold ! He will ascend it that his fall may be the greater. His last hour, friends, is by himself appointed. May this solemn pomp, evoked from the kings' sepulchre, become his funeral pomp, and may our daggers send his shade to-day to join the shade of Stuart ! Ah ! unmasked at last, the hypocrite and despot doth exhume the outlawed royalty to his own profit ; and, to take from Charles his sceptre stained with blood, doth grope about in the dark tomb to which our hands consigned him. From the tomb doth Cromwell dare abduct the crown. Ah ! may the crown fall back into the tomb, and carry Cromwell with it ! And hereafter

if some other dares aspire to reign alone, may the king's mantle ever be a winding-sheet.

LAMBERT (aside).

He goes too far.

OVERTON (continuing).

And may he be accursed !

ALL.

Accursed !

OVERTON (continuing).

To forward our designs doth everything conspire, and Cromwell with the rest. Yes, friends, this Cromwell by his fortune is made blind ; he seems an Attila created by a Machiavelli. Did he not bear aid to us, our empty wrath had spent itself in seeking to o'erthrow his power with the people ; 't is he himself who doth himself undo, not conscious that he shifts the ground whereon his feet do stand ; that death awaits him when he leaves his natal soil ; and that, in brief, when he becomes a king, thereafter he is but a man. As one whom death thus threatens, he to blows from every quarter doth expose himself. The common herd, his main support, desert him to unite with us ; he only doth ordain a ruinous divorce between himself and them. In giving us the people, he doth give us all his strength. Oppressed, down-trodden, all

within the law, by a lord protector, they are nothing loath to be, but never by a king. The people willingly do bend the knee to a plebeian tyrant. Oliver, protector, were he worse than Herod's self, still seems to them the only man, whose brow, uncrowned, can bear the uncertain burden of the state. But let that same brow don the diadem, and all is changed ; henceforward, to this people who did love it, 't is but a king's head, a fitting subject for the executioner.

ALL (except Lambert, and Barebones, who, since the arrival of the conspirators, has seemed to be absorbed in thought).

Well said !

JOYCE.

Our swords have left the scabbard ; reeking let them be returned to it, and for the second time bathed to the hilt in a king's blood !

PRIDE.

So Cromwell comes to Westminster to seek his tomb ! Of his ungodly sect, foredoomed to hell, he was the great high priest ! he fain would be their idol. Let him be immolated on the altar made ready for his coronation !

LUDLOW.

Wolsey, Goffe and Skippon, officers of his own guards, will strike with us if he doth place the crown upon his head. From our avenging daggers naught can save him now. Fletwood, his son-in-law, and Desborough his brother, will not raise their hands to save him ; firm in the faith, and true republicans at heart, they love him better dead than king.

HARRISON.

Honor to Fletwood and to Desborough ! their hearts know naught of childish fear or womanish compassion !

GARLAND (who has thus far remained silent, with his eyes fixed on the first rays of the rising sun).

Never did so fair a sunrise break upon my eyes. Ah ! brethren, how great a victim do we smite to-day ! Ne'er hath it been so vast a source of pride and joy to me to feel that I do tread the path marked out for me by God ; no, not when Strafford, at our bidding, laid his head between the holy blade and consecrated block ; nor when died Laud, more execrable still than he, the diabolic meteor of the Star Chamber, the ungodly prelate who, from his temple wherein Bethel once again was born, did turn the sacrilegious altar to the east, and, jeering frantically at our Sabbath day, did prostitute the day of prayer to gaming ; nor when Stuart, who, exulting in his ancient rights, mistook the splendor that surrounds a king for God's own glory, knelt, in his superb and earthly royalty, before the people's axe ! With each of these methought that Antichrist was immolated in his human guise ; but now I see that 't is in Cromwell that triumphant Zion doth at last strike down that infamous impostor, and doth hurl him from the steps of his precarious throne to Tophet whence the devil vomited him forth ! Oh ! glorious day ! Goliath, England's terror, to cast down from his great height, face downward, to the ground !

SYNDERCOMB.

Ah ! what a dagger-thrust to deal !

PRIDE.

What honor for the saints who fight the Lord Almighty's battles !

JOYCE (mounting the throne).

May his blood flow forth in streams upon this purple, where our net awaits him !

(At these words, Barebones, who has thus far listened in silence, starts as if a disquieting thought had suddenly occurred to him.)

BAREBONES (striking his brow, aside).

In good sooth, where are my wits? With their vile blood they surely will deface my throne! And then what shall I do? The stuff will lose one-fifth in value.

(Aloud, after a moment's reflection.)

Brethren, your words are sweet as honey to my soul. I am the humblest member of the flock, but list to me. In due obedience to the sacred texts you seek to poniard Cromwell. Is it within the law? Remember Malchus, him the mutilation of whose ear made Jesus curse the sword. Doth not the Lord Omnipotent inhibit us from smiting with the sword and shedding blood? Upon this point, if aught of doubt abideth in your minds, consult the book of Genesis at chapter nine, and Numbers, chapter thirty-five.

(Exclamations of surprise and indignation among the roundheads.)

JOYCE.

How now! who doth speak thus?

LUDLOW.

I prithee, Barebones, what hath so allayed thy zeal?

GARLAND.

You wish to spare the antichrist?

BAREBONES (hesitatingly).

Far from it—I do not say that . . .

SYNDERCOMB.

Are you a faithless brother?

HARRISON.

Are we workers of iniquity, deserving condemnation? Murderers?

OVERTON.

To kill is not to murder. Before the altar, whereon a pure flame doth burn, the impure goat becomes a consecrated victim, and the butcher is transformed into a sacrificer.

Samuel slew Agag, we the lord protector. We are the ministers of the Most High and of the people.

JOYCE (to Barebones).

To my mind your lowering glance did bode no good. You would save Cromwell. That 's the sum and substance of it.

BAREBONES.

God in heaven! Barebones seek to shelter Attila!

SYNDERCOMB (with a wrathful glance at Barebones).

He is a Perizzite, a Zoroastrian at the very least.

GARLAND.

Whence comes this ominous compassion for Cromwell?

BAREBONES.

To shed his blood is to infringe the law!

SYNDERCOMB (bringing his hand down violently upon Barebones's shoulder).

But must we not this monarch's purple cloak dye red for him?

PRIDE.

Barebones is mad!

WILDMAN.

Wouldst thou draw back, my brother?

LUDLOW (shaking his head).

There be traitors who disguise their treachery as scruples!

BAREBONES (alarmed).

Can you think—?

SYNDERCOMB (furiously).

Be still!

GARLAND (to Barebones).

Hast thou perchance drunk water from the Dead Sea?

HARRISON.

He doth uphold Belshazzar!

OVERTON.

Are you another Achan, come to our valleys to disturb the peace of the abandoned tribes?

PRIDE.

Barebones I do not recognize! Hath not some demon taken on his features to bear aid to Ammon!

GARLAND.

Even so! Last night I had a fearful dream.

SYNDERCOMB (drawing his dagger).

Let us submit his magic powers to the test of the cold steel.

(At sight of the gleaming blade, Barebones, who has thus far tried ineffectually to obtain a hearing, shouts at the top of his lungs.)

Pray listen to me!

LAMBERT.

Speak.

BAREBONES (in deadly terror).

My friends, I have no wish to save the English Ehud from a death he richly doth deserve. But we may kill him, and commit no sacrilege, with bludgeon, cord, or poison—what you will!

SYNDERCOMB (replacing his dagger in its sheath).

'T is well!

GARLAND (pressing Barebones's hand.)

I heard you ill.

WILDMAN (to Barebones).

I love to see thee once again inspired by worthy sentiments.

OVERTON (to Barebones).

E'en though it be a heinous sin to shed his blood, we have not time to kill him in due form.

BAREBONES (yielding with bad grace).

So be it! an it please you, poniard the accursed.

(Aside.)

Nathless 't is terrible!

GARLAND.

The sword of Judith is own brother to the daggers that do strike him down. Their place is ready in the arsenal of heaven.

HARRISON.

Brethren, let us give thanks to the Lord God. 'T is he who doth enable us to scorn the aid of the ungodly cavaliers. Their aid would have defiled our labors, cast a blemish on our glory. But the Lord, who doth reserve for us alone the victory, confounding the designs of Ormond and of Oliver, gives Ormond o'er to Cromwell, Cromwell to the saints.

ALL (brandishing their daggers).

Blessed be the Lord!

LAMBERT.

My friends, the time is slipping by; the people soon will flock to Westminster. Suppose we are surprised?

OVERTON (in an undertone to Joyce).

Lambert is ever timid!

LAMBERT.

Let us not in false security remain inactive; why do we pause, my friends? Let us conclude the matter with all speed.

SYNDERCOMB.

We must direct our blows where he no armor wears; that 's all.

LAMBERT.

But where? when? how?

OVERTON.

Among the onlookers, or those who have allotted parts to play, take we our stand and closely watch the ceremony, holding our daggers ever ready in our hands. First we

shall hear a flock of orators, harangues by preachers and by aldermen ; then Cromwell will receive, upon his transitory throne, the purple cloak from Warwick, the sword from the lord-mayor, the seals from Whitelocke, and, to add still further to the desecration, from Thomas Widdrington the Bible with the clasps of gold ; and, last of all, from Lambert he will take the crown. 'T will be the crucial moment. Then, let us surround him and, the instant that the unclean diadem doth glisten on his forehead, let us strike !

ALL.

Amen !

LAMBERT.

But who shall be the first to strike ?

SYNDERCOMB.

I !

PRIDE.

I !

WILDMAN.

I !

OVERTON.

Mine should be the honor.

GARLAND.

I lay claim to it. This sword of mine, to make its aim the surer, I have blessed.

HARRISON.

I will begin. My dagger owes a blow to the old poisoner for each one of the Lord's one hundred names ; and for a se'nnight past my arms have trained themselves to strike unerringly upon a Cromwell made of wax.

LUDLOW.

Of dealing such a blow great is the glory ; I do' readily conceive that each of us doth crave it for himself. For my own part, if ever in my prayers I have unceasingly invoked from Heaven some transcendent favor, it was the honorable privilege of immolating Cromwell with my own unaided hand. I fain

would have my progeny say of their ancestor : " He overcame the genius of the Stuarts and of Cromwell ; twice did Ludlow strike down tyranny ! " But this same Ludlow, patriotic citizen, prefers the people's welfare to his own. Of all our number Lambert holds the highest rank. As bearer of the crown, upon the platform he of all will be best placed to strike a deadly blow.

LAMBERT (alarmed, aside).

What can he mean ?

LUDLOW (continuing).

At such a moment it becomes each one of us to sacrifice his own desires to the public welfare. Follow my example. Ludlow doth relinquish and entrust to General Lambert the honor of the first blow.

LAMBERT (aside).

Who asks him so to do ? He doth undo me ! it will be my death !

PRIDE.

'T is well ; I yield to Ludlow's reasoning.

SYNDERCOMB.

I sacrifice myself.

(To Lambert.)

And you shall strike the blow.

LAMBERT (stammering).

My friends,—so great an honor doth console me in my sorrow . . .

(Aside.)

Dire perplexity !

WILDMAN (to Lambert).

You will lay Cromwell low ! how fortunate are you !

GARLAND.

On Satan you will charge like the arch-angel !

LAMBERT (with a perturbed expression).
Brethren, I am much embarrassed . . .

OVERTON (in an undertone to Joyce).
Prithee, see how he doth change !

JOYCE (in the same tone).
The coward !

LAMBERT (continuing).
I am overjoyed . . .
(Aside.)

Nay, I am in despair ! what shall I do ?
Ah ! Ludlow !
(Aloud.)

Honored by your choice, I can not well
express my joy . . .

OVERTON (in an undertone to Joyce).
His joy doth make him pale !

LAMBERT (continuing).
But . . .

GARLAND.
May the god of the invincible himself make
manifest in you !

SYNDERCOMB (to Lambert).
The part you have to play will be as easy of
accomplishment as glorious !
(He mounts the platform and points to the arm-chair.)

There Cromwell will be seated,—Nebo
rather, for Cromwell and Nebo have ever been
but the one devil !

(He steps forward and points to the spot where Lam-
bert should stand.)

Here you will stand . . .

LAMBERT (aside).
There is no remedy.

SYNDERCOMB (pursuing his demonstration).
And as you give the crown, putting aside
his cloak, you can strike home without ado.
Ah ! I do envy you.

LAMBERT (to Syndercomb).
My friend, as a good brother should, I yield
to you the honor of the blow.

LUDLOW (earnestly to Lambert).
Nay, yours must be the hand ; for you alone
will be well placed to strike. Were Synder-
comb to undertake it, 't would imperil every-
thing.

LAMBERT (insisting).
But I am the least worthy . . .

OVERTON.
What ! doth Lambert falter ?

LAMBERT (aside).
Courage !
(Aloud.)

I will strike the blow.

ALL (brandishing their daggers).
Down with the Amalekite ! Death to Oliver
Cromwell !

BAREBONES (supplicatingly).
In mercy's name, give ear to me, brethren ;
when from a false king you deliver Israel,
when you do plunge your daggers into Crom-
well's body,—do not spoil this throne ! This
velvet 's very dear, 't is worth ten piasters the
ell.

(At these words, all the Puritans start back, casting
horrified glances at Barebones, who continues, with-
out observing them.)

Be careful when you strike to spare these
curtains ! See to it that he falls upon his back
if possible, so that the blood of this unveiled
Moloch may flow as sparingly as may be on
my carpets from Aleppo !

(Renewed outburst of indignation among the con-
spirators.)

SYNDERCOMB (looking askance at Barebones).
Who is this publican ?

PRIDE.

What ! Barebones once again !

GARLAND.

Methought I heard the voice of Nebuchadnezzar !

WILDMAN (to Barebones).

Hast thou not learned the parable of Dives ?

LUDLOW.

While we offer up our lives, you count your caroluses !

OVERTON (laughing).

Even so. My gentleman, upholsterer to Cromwell, calling Heaven to his aid to save his velvet, doth bestow his merchandise beneath God's watchful care !

GARLAND.

With such unworthy trifles to concern one's self, if I must say it, is to evoke the fury of the sluggish thunderbolt !

WILDMAN.

'T is damnable Erastianism !

BAREBONES (aside).

Alas ! in very truth, that is the word !

(Aloud.)

Permit me to explain. Is one rebellious to his God, and false to the republic, for that he doth not disdain the worldly goods God gives to man in his brief day on earth, the consolation granted to the flesh ?

(Pointing to the throne.)

From base to canopy yon throne's ten cubits high. May I not well regret the sumptuous fabric ? All that I own is here.

HARRISON (gazing covetously at the gorgeous decorations indicated by Barebones).

'T is very fine ! I' faith, I had not noticed it ! These tassels are of gold, pure gold ! Look, Syndercomb. Yon chair alone, all

covered with brocade, is worth a thousand gold Jacobuses.

BAREBONES.

Aye, at the very least !

HARRISON (to Syndercomb).

What sayest thou ?

SYNDERCOMB (devouring the arm-chair with his eyes).

Rich booty !

BAREBONES (with a start).

What said he ?

SYNDERCOMB (to the other conspirators).

God, who doth second our designs, my brethren, doth bestow upon his saints all this world's goods, and this belongs to us. When Cromwell falls beneath our blows, we may divide the spoil amongst ourselves.

BAREBONES.

Nay, nay ! O Heaven ! my cloth of gold, my curtains and my silk !

SYNDERCOMB.

The golden calf is of the eagles of Libanus the destined prey !

BAREBONES.

Eagles ! say rather crows ! Wouldst thou in very truth—?

OVERTON (stepping between them).

My friends, first let us strike ; we will adjust these matters afterward !

ALL.

Amen !

BAREBONES (aside).

Damnation ! They are veritable pirates ! Pillage is their purpose ! Brigands ! ingrates ! What to do I know not. They would cause my faithfulness to Zion to grow cool ! Divide my property among them all ! Damnation !

(Barebones withdraws from the midst of the conspirators, and seems to be absorbed in bitter thoughts.)

OVERTON (to the roundheads who gather about him).

Brethren, while we await the hour when Israel shall meet the King of Babylon body to body, and raise aloft by our devoted hands the standard whereupon the harp and palm tree live again, let six of us take up their station in the apartment of the body-guards.

ALL.

'T is well.

OVERTON.

Let twelve together stand, their daggers hid before the halberds, on the steps where Richard did confer the spur on Norfolk; four in the court of Aids; four in the court of Wards. The others, scattered here and there among the chapels of the ancient Stuarts, Tudors, and Plantagenets, guarding the stairways, barricading corridors, and, whether Oliver doth gain or lose the day, at hand to close the way to him or open it to us, should by their speech add fuel to the flame which smoulders darkly in the mourning people's hearts, and, spurring on the anger of the sacred tribes, speed the eruption of the popular volcano.

ALL (except Barebones, brandishing their daggers).

May Abiron be consumed therein! and Dathan!

GARLAND. (He falls upon his knees in the centre of the circle of Puritans, and cries aloud, holding his dagger in the air.)

O Almighty God, who didst create the worm and the leviathan, in thy great mercy smile upon our holy undertaking. Suffer this dagger to come reeking forth from Cromwell's breast, and therein manifest thy much derided power. Guide our blows, O just and merciful and loving God! So may thy enemies be given over to destruction! Since we thus expose our pious faith in thee, O God! make thou thy flaming sword, thy tongue of fire, to shine resplendent in our hands and on our brows!

(He rises, and the Puritans, who stand for some time with heads bent forward, seem to be praying with him.)

BAREBONES (aside).

The abomination dwelleth in their thoughts. Divide my goods, forsooth!

LAMBERT.

My friends, the hour has passed. Let us begone.

(Aside.)

How strike the blow?

LUDLOW.

A truce to further talk. Now let us act! let the accursed adjust his reckoning with the elect!

(All the conspirators, except Barebones, file off the stage with the same solemn gravity that marked their entrance. As Lambert is about to pass through the door, Overton detains him.)

SCENE V

LAMBERT, OVERTON, BAREBONES.

(Throughout the scene Barebones, whose mind is apparently engrossed by painful thoughts, is hidden from his two companions by the platform of the throne.)

OVERTON.

General.

LAMBERT.

What now?

OVERTON.

A word with you.

LAMBERT.

I listen.

(Both return to the front of the stage and stand a moment, facing each other, Lambert waiting silently, and Overton evidently at a loss where to begin.)

OVERTON.

Have you a sure hand?

LAMBERT.

Do you misdoubt it?

OVERTON.

Aye, I do misdoubt it.

LAMBERT (haughtily).

Sirrah!

OVERTON.

Hark ye. To your arm we do entrust the sword of Israel to make an end of Cromwell; you are he of whom we do make choice to tear aside the veil and cut the knot of this portentous drama. But the honor Overton had gladly purchased with his blood, with terror at your heart you did receive. 'T would give you joy that someone should dispatch

your task for you. I know you root and branch. Ambitious and a coward!

(Lambert makes an indignant gesture. Overton checks him.)

Let me speak! I say naught of your plans, concealed behind an ill-adjusted mask. I will not tell you that my eye doth look you through and through, and that I feel your plot, although to all appearance yet unborn, a-brewing in the bosom of the great conspiracy. You count upon our handiwork to set yourself afloat. You fancy, in your overweening pride, that we would put aside a giant to replace him with a paltry dwarf. 'T is your desire simply to be Cromwell's heir, and nothing in the burden that he bears doth give you pause; and yet 't is somewhat heavy for your back. I see the hand that grasps and not the arm that bears. But naught could be more artless than these dispositions, whereby you guide the course of destiny to your own liking. You have faith that you will have the people at your back in everything, as if the world had ever known an instance where, when a yoke bore heavily upon the necks of a free people, a tyrant was less odious for being more contemptible!

LAMBERT (in a rage).

Colonel Overton! This insult . . .

OVERTON.

At your pleasure I will answer to you for it. For the moment deign to listen to the plain

unvarnished truth. You are not king as yet, to be cajoled! Now, passing from your dreams of empire, the spirit doth inspire me to speak these words to you. You have a blow to strike at thought of which you tremble; I shall be near at hand among the onlookers assembled in this place. And if your hand doth falter, if, the instant that his hand doth place the crown upon his brow, you do not first of all chastise his insolence

and drive your dagger home,—why, I shall be more prompt.

(He exhibits his dagger.)

You see this knife. Failing the other this will seek his heart by way of yours.

(Lambert recoils in dismay and wrath.)

I leave you now to make your choice betwixt two dastard deeds.

(Exit.)

SCENE VI

LAMBERT, BAREBONES (still at the corner of the stage).

LAMBERT (trembling with rage and following Overton as far as the great door).

You dare! Audacious villain! Listen! He has gone. And on my brow a burning flush doth charge this hand of mine with moving all too slowly to chastise him! He has gone! Ah! did the traitor humble me enow? What frenzied fools they be to whom my schemes have bound me fast! Alas! the life I've led since first I did conspire! constantly forced backward from the goal whereon my thoughts were fixed, threatened with total ruin at the moment of our triumph, and o'erwhelmed with countless insults amid countless perils! By the tyrant trodden under foot, and wounded by the slaves! Should I draw back? behind me the abyss! Should I go forward? there my path lies over molten lava! Overton, or Cromwell! Victim, or executioner! Go to! he, draw his sword against me! Aye, he would, in very truth! I know him to be equal to it. I must strike the blow!

BAREBONES (unheard and unseen by Lambert).

Yon evil-minded crew would plunder me!

LAMBERT (musing).

Strike Cromwell down among his chosen friends! before his guards! He who hath overwhelmed me with his benefits! 'T is base ingratitude! And then, if I should miss my aim?

BAREBONES (pensively).

To rob me of the capital wherewith to found a bank!

LAMBERT.

Accursed ambition! thou hast led me to look far too high! My foot in seeking to ascend the throne doth stumble on the block! (He strides back and forth in great excitement, and glances through the window.)

But someone comes. I must begone. The crowd is even now assembling. I must go and don a garb more fitting for the ceremony.

(Exit.)

BAREBONES.

Faithless brethren! on my worldly goods you look with eyes of envy! Woe to you! and woe to me! and woe to everyone!

(Exit.)

SCENE VII

TRICK, GIRAFFE, ELESPURU: afterward GRAMADOCH.

(The three jesters enter the great hall by the principal door and cast a sidelong glance at Barebones as he takes his leave.)

TRICK.

'T is Barebones!

GIRAFFE.

He hath not a joyous air.

ELESPURU.

Fanatical old fool!

TRICK.

A Samuel behind the counter! Jeremiah in the counting-house!

ELESPURU.

'T was he who furnished all this fine array for Cromwell.

TRICK.

He doth rob him.

GIRAFFE.

Better still; he doth assassinate him!

TRICK.

Thus his thirst for blood and gold is sated upon Noll; 't is his design to take from him at one fell swoop his purse and life.

ELESPURU.

What matters it to us?

GIRAFFE.

Where shall we take our places?

TRICK (pointing to a box behind the throne between two timbers).

In yon gallery.

ELESPURU.

Yes. 'T will hold us all.

(The three jesters pass under the hangings and reappear a moment later in the box.)

TRICK.

We are well placed.

GIRAFFE.

Aye, we shall have a glorious view of all that happens.

ELESPURU (stretching himself out upon a cushion, and yawning).

'T is a tidy place to take a nap upon both ears. I do sorely need it. Trick, we were great fools to watch all night beneath dew-laden branches, and to follow in the open air this drama, scene by scene, at risk of taking cold and eke the lordly gout!

TRICK.

Cromwell will compensate us at his coronation. Gramadoch doth promise us a most rare ending.

GIRAFFE.

Gramadoch! Him we shall see in all his glory as train-bearer, armed with his wand of ivory!

ELESPURU.

Glory? As you will, my friends! For my part, I'd not carry Cromwell's train, poor

jester that I am! What shame! in face of the whole city and the country round, to be thus seen pulling the devil by the tail!

TRICK.

(He sings.)

I cannot deny that I love to see
King Oliver Last, for such he 'll be,
And Gramadoch, Platonic clown,
At opposite ends of the same old gown.
I' faith, there 'll be no greater joke
In all the solemn pageantry,
Than folly and genius rare to see
Both clinging to a royal cloak.

GIRAFFE.

Though Gramadoch hath little of the air of true nobility, he 'll have the aspect of a fool holding a sage in leash.

ELESPURU.

The fool will be in front!

TRICK.

But when all 's said and done, pray why doth Cromwell have a train-bearer?

ELESPURU.

Eh! Trick is very sly! 'T is to prevent the royal mantle dragging in the mud and sweeping up the floor.

TRICK.

I understand; methinks the motive is a good one. But who will prevent its dragging upon Cromwell?

GIRAFFE.

Ormond would have done it!

ELESPURU.

True, but Cromwell sends him to the devil with a rope about his neck, barefooted, to make due amends.

GIRAFFE.

Poor man! Is he already hanged?

TRICK.

Not yet.

GIRAFFE.

So much the better! When we shall have brought this wearisome performance to a close, we may perchance go hence in time to see him hanged. We need to laugh a bit!

TRICK.

My friends, all things considered, we may well, methinks, find food for laughter here. For death will play its part at Westminster as well! If I 've good eyes, Cromwell is marching straight to his destruction. At the end his undeserved good fortune doth desert him. I have walked London o'er from end to end. On every side the passers-by do one another greet with gloomy faces. On the Strand, at Temple Bar, I heard the jealous soldiers roar with anger at the name of king. Exchanging signals secretly, the factions have ere this joined forces against Cromwell. Everything doth threaten him.

ELESPURU.

What of the people?

TRICK.

They do watch and wait. They 're like the leopard looking on while two wolves fight. He waits, and lets them rend each other undisturbed, content to know that one, the vanquished, will remain for him to feed upon. In fine, the mine is laid, and, if I err not, here upon this spot it will be sprung beneath the feet of Oliver.

GIRAFFE (joyously).

Ah! what an uproar will the fools and saints together make! Their swords will clash and we will clap our hands!

ELESPURU.

(He sings.)

Oliver, beware, my master!
Traitors ever meet disaster.
Demon hands, which work the faster,
May have reared yon throne.
Death the lofty platform builded,
To a catafalque begilded
Changed it may be soon.
Dire calamity doth hover
This ill-fated structure over;
False thy star hath shone.
All about this palace dread
Witches in the dark have said
Their mystic A B C.
Should the purple fall away,
'T would grim skeletons display,
'Neath yon violet trappings gay
And gorgeous canopy:
And on yon treacherous stairway wide
Doth the splendid carpet hide
From thy gaze, O regicide,
The ladder of the gallows-tree.

TRICK AND GIRAFFE (applauding).
Delightful!

TRICK.

By the way, my friends! an idea.

(Elespuru and Giraffe draw near Trick with deep interest.)

While Gramadoch, above our heads, doth
gravely hold the train of Cromwell's robe
beneath the eye of Parliament, just at the
solemn moment, to the beard of the mace-
bearing clerks, we must e'en make him laugh
aloud with our wry faces.

ELESPURU (clapping his hands).

'T is well thought of!

GIRAFFE (cutting a caper).

Excellent!

A VOICE WITHOUT (singing).

When the abbess casts down her eye,

I

Opine that her glances sly

Lie.

She doth vainly her heart to inflame

Aim;

'T was long ago given to love,
True love.

Not relics as cold as a stone

Alone

This queen of the convent cells
Sells.

Love! when one a canoness is,

Is

It sinful thy name to know?

No!

(Enters Gramadoch.)

TRICK.

How now! why, 't is himself! 't is Grama-
doch!

GIRAFFE (to Gramadoch).

What brings thee here to-day among us?

TRICK (to Gramadoch).

Prithee when did ever a man see upon this
earth the train-bearer before his master?

GRAMADOCH.

To pay his court to the new king with
notoriety, Lord Roberts' son hath intrigued
for my post; and since a great lord chose to
be my colleague, I for to-day am honorary
train-bearer.

ELESPURU.

A lord's son carry Cromwell's cloak! Our
shame 's his glory, and he deigns to envy it!
Pray let us leave him to his task. My friend,
let me embrace thee. For the honor of the
jesters doth my pride give thanks to thee.

(Gramadoch climbs up into the box, and his comrades
gather around him.)

GIRAFFE.

Thy wit was lacking to our gayety, my
brother.

TRICK.

Aye, the more fools there be, quoth he,
the more we laugh. It gives me joy that

we should be all four in the same hiding-place.

ELESPURU.

There 's sport the gods might envy when we fools are all together.

GRAMADOCH.

It doth please me, too.

(Enters Milton.)

But here is Master Milton ; now our circle is complete.

SCENE VIII

THE FOUR JESTERS, MILTON.

MILTON (accompanied by his guide).

(He walks slowly forward, and stands for a long time with his face turned toward the throne, as if overwhelmed by blank despair.)

It must be. It is done! I must e'en drain the chalice to the dregs; resign myself to undergo the torture, nor lose a single pang; to see this man made king! The stage is ready. Ere this day has passed he will have gone down to the tomb or fallen on a throne.

TRICK (in an undertone to Gramadoch).

The bard of Satan turns you off a sermon handily.

MILTON (continuing).

Whether he die or reign, upon this spot the grave doth yawn for Cromwell on this fatal day. Woe 's me! to Cromwell king doth Cromwell hero sacrifice himself, and for the diadem doth lay aside the laurel wreath. O woeful

downfall of the most sublime of heads! Cromwell would fain be king! With eager haste he gives his glory for exalted rank, his name for a vain title!

GRAMADOCH (in an undertone to Trick).

He doth not preach ill for one who has no mitre!

MILTON (continuing).

Ah! how hard a task for me to hate this man archangel, whose name I would have written on the altar stones! How he, the man in whom I once adored the living truth, hath lulled our vigilance to sleep with cunning artifice! Hither I come to say farewell to thee for aye, ill-fated king, a traitor to the people and to God! Put on the royalty of Cæsar and of Guise. The crown is gilded and the dagger keen.

(He withdraws to a corner of the stage, on the side opposite the jesters, and stands there motionless.)

SCENE IX

THE SAME: THE PEOPLE. Afterward WILLIS; then OVERTON, SYNDERCOMB, and the Puritan Conspirators.

(Enters a group of citizens, men, both old and young, and women, in Puritan garb. They seem to belong to various professions. Among them is one of the disbanded republican soldiers. They rush upon the stage tumultuously, the foremost shouting to those behind them.)

This way !

MILTON (to his page).

Who comes?

THE PAGE.

The people.

MILTON (bitterly).

In good sooth ! The people ! Ever credulous, and ever dazzled by vain show, they come to see their destiny made merry with by others than themselves, upon a stage embellished at their cost.

A CITIZEN.

No guards as yet !

SECOND CITIZEN.

By good luck we are first upon the scene.

THIRD CITIZEN.

So let us quickly take the better places.

(They station themselves near the throne. Enters Sir Richard Willis, wrapped in a cloak.)

TRICK.

See these honest cits, and yonder squint-eyed man. A motive other than the common curiosity doth guide his steps. They come to see, and he to watch. 'T is the spy, Willis.

GIRAFFE.

Why reproach him? Must the wise man feed on empty words? They are sight-seers of two different kinds, that 's all.

(Enter Overton and Syndercomb. They mingle silently with the throng of spectators already assembled.)

FIRST CITIZEN (calling his neighbor's attention to the platform).

'T will be a noble sight.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Superb, my friend !

THIRD CITIZEN.

Our Oliver doth not do things by halves.

A WOMAN.

The throne is solid gold !

SECOND WOMAN.

The fringe is beautiful !

THIRD WOMAN.

We shall have games and spectacles and holidays ! At last !

A TRADESMAN (in the crowd).

This Barebones is most fortunate, upon my word. This comes from having had a brother in the Parliament !

FIRST CITIZEN (to the tradesman).

True ; in the *Rump* he was the bare back-bone.'

THE TRADESMAN (examining the drapery of a pillar).

He sells them this for stuff from China ! Court upholsterer ! if such good luck should me befall, upon my knees I 'd place my letters-patent in my Bible. He should make money by the ton.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Long live King Oliver !

FIRST WOMAN.

No more dull, prosy preachers ! Balls will come in again.

SECOND CITIZEN.

And horse-races.

THIRD WOMAN.

And actors jeering at the sheriff's men.

SECOND WOMAN.

The gipsies, too, who came in troops to Mulberry Gardens to dance sarabands . . .

THE OLD SOLDIER (who has thus far looked on in silence, steps toward the women, and shouts in a voice of thunder).

Ye women, hold your peace !

(General surprise among the citizens.)

FIRST CITIZEN.

How now ! methinks he is a soldier !

SECOND CITIZEN.

What has he to say to wives of honest folk ?

THE SOLDIER (to the citizens).

Ye women, hold your peace !

THE CITIZENS.

We, women !

THE SOLDIER.

Even so ! more women than these others !

(Pointing to the women.)

They are poor, weak souls ; but what is one to say of you, who do in naught surpass them save in your air of foolish joy, and your insensate laughter ?

OVERTON (bringing his hand down upon the soldier's shoulder).

Bravely said ! doubtless, my gallant fellow, you have been overladen with injustice ? After long and faithful services, discharged, as we have been ? dismissed from your employment ?

THE SOLDIER.

Much worse than that he doth to me ; for he would fain reign over me !

OVERTON (to the crowd).

My friends, he 's right ! Is this, in sooth, a time to laugh, when God doth thunder forth his wrath and Israel doth weep ? and when a man, oppressing them who have exalted him, doth seek to foist a throne upon an overburdened people ? when everything concurs to aggravate the ills that England doth endure ?

FIRST CITIZEN.

Well said. But yonder soldier is too harsh of speech.

(The crowd gradually increases in size. Enters the workman Nahum.)

OVERTON.

Ah ! brethren, pray forgive this noble martyr the accents of a heart inflamed by all this Tyrian pomp ; let him alone his bitter lamentations mingle with his country's shrieks, alas ! our common mother's, whom the birth-throes of a king to-day do rend asunder !

THIRD CITIZEN.

Of a king ! the word offends me, and I know not why.

SECOND CITIZEN.

All that I thought in my own mind, this gentleman doth put in words.

NAHUM.

A king 's a tyrant.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Long live the republic !

OVERTON.

Such a king ! Cromwell forsooth ! a villain !
an oppressor ! Pray what was he yesterday ?

THE SOLDIER.

A soldier.

THE TRADESMAN.

Nay, a brewer.

THIRD CITIZEN.

Who will save us from this ghastly spectacle ?

FIRST CITIZEN.

Would one have said that Cromwell could
take such a course ! Usurp the throne ! 't is
terrible !

NAHUM.

If he dares call himself a king, 't is down-
right sacrilege !

SECOND CITIZEN.

A crime.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Moreover, royalty 's proscribed.

OVERTON.

You all have rights in yonder throne.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Most true. Why is 't more his than ours ?

OVERTON.

Hell marks out his path. He would restore
the royalty and all the old abuses !

NAHUM.

And give back its former name of Jebus to
Jerusalem !

OVERTON.

And crush us 'neath the weight of an
abominable throne !

FIRST WOMAN.

Have I not heard that he hath made a com-
pact with the evil one ?

SECOND WOMAN.

They say his eyes do seem to shine at
night.

THIRD WOMAN.

And that his mouth contains three rows of
teeth.

(One by one all the Puritan conspirators enter, except
Lambert. They exchange grasps of the hand as
they meet, and silently mingle with the crowd.)

NAHUM.

He is the monster by Saint John described.

SECOND CITIZEN.

He is the beast of the Apocalypse.

THE SOLDIER.

Aye, so he is.

OVERTON.

The nine plagues Cromwell doth bring down
upon our heads.

NAHUM.

He 's an Assyrian !

OVERTON.

Yes, now our woes have reached their cul-
minating point.

THE TRADESMAN.

I cannot sell my wares !

THE SOLDIER.

Barefooted must we go, and starve, and lie
on the cold ground ! We soon shall have no
resource but to fashion with our teeth the nails
for his footgear, while Noll doth hang his
cipher on these pillars.

OVERTON.

We shall go and wait about his door to beg
for alms !

NAHUM.

What we must give to Cromwell is no throne, but the cross of Barabbas, or Haman's gibbet.

SYNDERCOMB.

Death to Cromwell!

WILLIS (amid the crowd).

Death!

MILTON (starting at Willis's voice, to the conspirators).

My friends, speak not so loud.

WILLIS.

Death to the usurper!

THE SOLDIER.

Not so loud! What matters it? I will shout: "Death!" to him on his own threshold!

NAHUM (to the soldier).

God's decrees are uttered in no feeble tones. Thy mouth is undefiled, old soldier.

THE SOLDIER (to Nahum).

As thou seest me, a beggar, and like the ooze forgotten on the strand, left bare by the receding tide of human fortune, I shall die consoled, if I can see this child of Sirah meet his due reward!

OVERTON (drawing him aside, and showing him his dagger).

My friend, we will console you.

(The soldier makes a gesture of surprise and joy which Overton checks.)

Hush!

(Enters a detachment of Cromwell's regiment, in red uniform, with breastplates, carrying muskets and halberds.)

The guards are to be posted; we must hold our peace.

(The soldiers force the crowd back to the sides of the hall.)

THE COMMANDING OFFICER (in a loud voice).

Room for the Ironsides of the lion of old England!

(To certain citizens as he forces them back.)

Back, ye knaves!

ONE OF THE CITIZENS (in an undertone to his neighbor).

Their lordly air doth stamp them of my lord protector's regiment.

(The soldiers form a double line from the throne to the door.)

THE OLD SOLDIER (in an undertone to Overton, pointing to the officer).

Look! Ahab's officers wear silken doublets.

A YOUNG SENTRY (forcing him back into the crowd).

Back, my friend!

OVERTON (in an undertone to the old soldier).

Ha! how he jostles you! The bravoes have assumed the manners of the tyrant, and so soon doth the recruit insult the veteran.

THE SOLDIER (pressing his hand).

Have patience!

THE OFFICER (to his men).

Soldiers! the Holy Spirit doth convoke us. Let us all unite in prayer for our general!

OVERTON (to the officer).

Your general? say rather for your king.

THE OFFICER.

Our king? Who dares insult him thus?

OVERTON.

I.

THE OFFICER.

Be it so! you lie.

OVERTON.

Nay.

THE OFFICER.

Cromwell king ! May God forbid !

OVERTON.

He will be king to-day.

THE OFFICER.

Who told it thee ?

(Enters the champion of England, armed cap-à-pie, on horseback, and flanked by four halberdiers, carrying a banner with the protector's arms.)

OVERTON.

Look.

SCENE X

THE SAME: THE CHAMPION OF ENGLAND.

THE OLD SOLDIER (in an undertone to Overton).

Now let us hear what words he hath to scatter to the winds.

THE CHAMPION (still mounted, in front of the throne).

Hosannah!—In the name of the one living God I speak.—The most puissant Parliament, having by constant prayer long sought to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit, doth, to put an end to all the ills that weigh upon the people and the faith, take Oliver Cromwell and proclaim him king.

(Murmuring in the crowd.)

TRICK (in an undertone to his comrades).

Observe the growing wrath of yonder psalm-singers.

THE CHAMPION.

Now, if there be a man, in London, or in the three kingdoms, old or young, or citizen or belted knight, who dares dispute the right of my lord Oliver, we, England's Champion, do challenge him to mortal combat with the dagger, axe or sword, and we will do him justice without quarter, and will hang his 'scutcheon to the mane of this brave steed. If such a man there be in presence, let him arise and speak, and vindicate his words at the sword's point. You all are witnesses that I, by sin untainted, do throw down to him this gauntlet, drawn from my right hand.

(The champion throws down his glove in front of the crowd, draws his sword, and holds it over his head.)

THE STANDARD-BEARER and THE HALBERDIERS.

Hosannah.

(Silence of stupefaction among the people; all eyes are fixed upon the gauntlet.)

THE CHAMPION.

No one speaks?

OVERTON (aside).

Ah! must we hold our peace?

MILTON (in a loud voice).

Why but a single gauntlet, champion of England? If such be your master's schemes, he should throw down as many gauntlets as he thinks that he has subjects.

(Expressions of approval among the crowd.)

THE CHAMPION.

Who speaks? Yon blind man! Sirrah, begone!

(The soldiers push Milton aside. Overton draws near the officer commanding the guard, and looks questioningly at him.)

THE OFFICER (lowering his eyes with a gloomy expression).

All goes ill.

OVERTON (in an undertone to Syndercomb).

Nay, all goes well.

THE CHAMPION (casting his eyes over the throng).

How now! doth no one speak?

OVERTON (in an undertone to Milton, pressing his hand).

We will send Cromwell soon to join his glove.

MILTON (aside).

Alas!

THE CHAMPION.

I wait your pleasure.

THE OLD SOLDIER (aside, glancing at the champion).

Viper! braggart satellite!

SYNDERCOMB (to Overton).

I know not what doth keep me from chastising him.

(He steps toward the gauntlet. Overton detains him.)

OVERTON (to Syndercomb).

Let us be prudent!

GRAMADOCH (to his comrades, pointing to the group of Puritan conspirators).

Yonder fools will spoil the game. If they pick up the glove, farewell the rare conclusion. We must thwart them ere they ruin everything.

TRICK.

How so?

(Gramadoch shakes his head with a knowing air.)

THE CHAMPION (still with his sword above his head).

Doth no one answer me?

GRAMADOCH (leaping down from the box into the hall).

Yes, I!

(General astonishment among the people.)

THE CHAMPION (in amazement).

Thou dost pick up the gauntlet?

GRAMADOCH (suiting the action to the word).

Even so.

THE CHAMPION.

Who art thou, pray?

GRAMADOCH.

A dealer in grimaces like thyself. Our masks are both deceitful. My grimace doth make men laugh, and thine doth make them fear; that 's the whole difference.

THE CHAMPION.

Thou hast to me the aspect of a knave.

GRAMADOCH.

And thou likewise.

THE CHAMPION (to the halberdiers).

The man 's a fool.

GRAMADOCH.

Just so. From taste and principle. Indeed, at court, I hold the post of fool. So thou hast hit the mark.

VOICES IN THE CROWD.

The harlequin doth risk his neck.—'T is one of Cromwell's fools.—A daring venture.—Is he verily a fool?

MILTON.

Pray what is all this mummary?

(Shouts of laughter in the jesters' box.)

GRAMADOCH.

Come! let us take the field.

THE CHAMPION.

Vile mountebank! Begone, or I will have thee scourged.

GRAMADOCH.

What lofty scorn! Manikin as I am, thy grimaces are far less jovial. I say again, my friend, Cromwell doth pay us both to make a little noise at this diverting concert, where thy voice is the church-bell, and mine the tiny tinkler.

THE CHAMPION.

Miscreant!

GRAMADOCH.

We may, methinks, without dishonor, measure swords for Oliver or 'gainst him. I am his train-bearer, thou his speaking-trumpet.²

THE CHAMPION (angrily).

What weapon dost thou choose?

GRAMADOCH.

What weapon?

(He unsheaths his lath.)

I do choose this wooden sword.

(He brandishes it with a martial air.)

'T is the fit weapon to be used against a warrior of straw. On guard, my captain!

(To the crowd.)

Battle! battle!

(To the champion.)

Let us see if ours will be a counterpart to Dunbar, and if thy Durandal equals my Escalibar!³

(To the crowd.)

Come all, and see,

(Pointing to Milton.)

saving yon blind man's presence, the combat 'twixt the singing Falstaff and the bellowing Stentor. Come and see a jester thrash a bully.

OVERTON (to Syndercomb, in an undertone).

To my eyes this scene has the appearance of design.

GRAMADOCH (striding back and forth in front of the champion).

How now, my champion? pray, what's the matter? dost thou falter? thou, who didst burn

to shatter lances without counting them! My simple purpose is, in two assaults, to grind thee down to powder; afterwards thou canst pick up the pieces of thyself.

THE CHAMPION (pointing to Gramadoch).

Arrest this fool!

(The guards surround Gramadoch and seize him.)

GRAMADOCH. (He struggles with them, laughing in his beard.)

I am within my right. Coward! He is afraid! If he doth anger me, I'll bring a suit of *quare impedit* against him.

(The jesters in their box applaud with shouts of laughter.)

THE CHAMPION (solemnly).

No man having dared come forward to accept my challenge,—save a blind man and a fool,—I do proclaim to all the world Oliver Cromwell King of England!

THE CHAMPION'S SATELLITES.

God save King Oliver!

(Profound silence among the people and the soldiers.)

THE CHAMPION.

Now go we hence.

(He rides slowly off the stage with his retinue.)

SYNDERCOMB (in an undertone to Overton, pointing to Gramadoch, who is laughing heartily).

Yes, yes, 't was done to entertain the people.

OVERTON (in the same tone, pointing to the thunder-struck crowd).

Their attitude is threatening; they hold their peace.

SCENE XI

THE PEOPLE.

VOICES IN THE CROWD.

Old Noll is very slow!—When think you that he will come forth from Whitehall?—'T is hard to be compelled to wait like this.

(The sound of many bells is suddenly heard outside, mingled with the reports of cannon in the distance at regular intervals.)

Hush! d' ye hear the bells? the cannon?—He is coming.—Will he go by the Old Bailey?—No. By Piccadilly.—God! See the great crowd upon the square!—A crowd, indeed; 't is the whole population.—Heads above and heads below! a swarm of heads.—Although 't is very hot, there 's not a tile upon the roofs, nor pavement in the street that one can see for faces.—I have heard of balconies let out at a high price.—To see Cromwell! to see a face of flesh and blood! These Babylonians are mad.—God help me! I am stifling!—Look you! the procession marches out into the square.—At last!—Ah!

(Excitement among the people. All eyes are fixed in breathless suspense upon the great door.)

Tell me, who marches at the head?—'T is Major Skippon.—Skippon?—Aye, a gallant soldier, and of high repute!—At Worcester he was the first of the whole army to cross the Severn on the bridge of boats.—The saints that day played deftly with their swords!—But not so deftly as at Whitehall on the thirtieth of January!—Man! thou sayest it in a tone to make one long to knock thy brains out.

Hush.—I do but laugh.—Hush!—Laughing is not speech.—Were I not suffocating, I would come and strangle thee.—Peace! the Lord-Mayor comes.

(Enters the Lord-Mayor, with the Aldermen, Court of Common Council, and Sheriffs, all in their robes of office. The Lord-Mayor and corporation halt at the left of the great door.)

Pray cast your eye at Pack, the alderman, whom Cromwell, to do honor to the city, knighted with a fagot-stick.—He plumes himself upon his title mightily.—'T is on his motion that this Pilate is made king.

(Enter the justices in procession; they take their place at the top of the steps at the rear of the hall.)

Aha! the barons in their scarlet robes.—Huzza for Hale, the upright judge!—Huzza for Sergeant Wallop!—See the colonels riding by.—What! are there not enough of guards who serve for pay? The corporations in their robes draw up in line.—Noll is a tyrant! Noll is a usurper! a Titan who would scale the walls of heaven! Force is the only title of this new Enceladus. He does not mount the throne; he carries it by storm.—I prithee, peace, thou Oxford runagate! List to the pedant! Does he not speak Latin?—Eh! I have the right to call down curses on the head of Appius upon his curule chair!—He thinks he can kill Cromwell with a birchen rod!

(An usher dressed in black appears in the doorway.)

THE USHER.

Room for the Parliament! Make way!

(Enter the members of Parliament in double file, preceded by the Speaker, before whom march the mace-bearers, ushers, clerks and sergeants-at-arms. Intense interest among the spectators. While the members are taking their places on the steps at the rear, the people continue their conversation.)

VOICES IN THE CROWD.

Aha!—What is the speaker's name?—Sir Thomas Widdrington, methinks.—A comely man.—A Judas!

OVERTON (in an undertone to Wildman).

E'en the people have their little enmities. Observe that no one cries: "God save the Commons!"

WILDMAN (in the same tone).

God confound them! One and all they're sold to the usurper. Cromwell and Belatucadrus they adore.

TRICK (looking out upon the assemblage).

The justices, the aldermen, the Parliament. Aye, there are all the gods of poor old England! There they are!

GIRAFFE.

Diverting gods!

ELESPURU.

What say you to them, brethren?

GIRAFFE.

They are gods as we are fools.

TRICK.

I long to see the tempest burst upon this sober-faced Olympus.

GIRAFFE.

Even so, my Trick. My wayward mind, like thine, doth Pandemonium prefer to the Pantheon.

ELESPURU (pointing to Gramadoch, who is still held in custody by four halberdiers in a corner of the hall and is indulging in numberless contortions).

Look; Gramadoch is making signs to us.

GRAMADOCII (making wry faces at his comrades).

Ha! hum!

(The jesters laugh uproariously.)

ELESPURU.

His pleasantry was somewhat overdone.

TRICK.

However will he extricate himself from this?

GIRAFFE.

Eh! what care we?

ELESPURU.

'T is true, we had our laugh; and for the moment that is all we seek.

AN USHER (standing upon a gallery, richly decorated, facing the throne).

My lady, the protectress!

(All the civic functionaries rise with uncovered heads and bow low to the protectress, who appears upon the gallery, accompanied by her four daughters, each dressed according to her taste. The protectress, Mistress Fletwood and Lady Claypole are in black with jet ornaments; Lady Falconbridge in full court dress, mantle of gold brocade, skirt of ginger-colored velvet, trimmed with scorpions of Venetian lace; she wears the coronet of a countess; Lady Frances in a dress of white gauze with silver stripes. The protectress courtesies in acknowledgment of the salutation of the Lord-Mayor and Aldermen, and seats herself with her daughters at the front of the gallery. Their women take their places behind them.)

TRICK (to the jesters).

Ah! 't is well, in sooth, that that sweet face doth not as yet assume the name of queen.

A SOLDIER (to the jesters).

Peace, marplots!

TRICK (with a sneering laugh).

Give me a warrior to prate of peace.

(The soldier makes a threatening gesture; Trick resumes his seat with a disdainful shrug. As Cromwell's family enters there is a great commotion among the crowd, and every eye is fixed on the gallery occupied by them.)

VOICES IN THE CROWD.

How now! 't is the protectress! By her look she hath a heavy wit.—The daughter of one Bouchier.—'T is a lovely dream she dreams.—My friend, who is that youthful Eve at her right hand?—The Lady Frances.—Is 't her daughter?—Yes.—Old Noll must have then five or six?—No, four. You see them all.—The youngest is a dainty miss.—How hot it is!—'T is almost past endurance.—Still the throng increases.—We are packed together here as closely as the fiends of hell, in number equal to the grains of sand upon the sea-shore.—'Faith, the birds are fortunate to have a pair of wings.—I 'm crushed!

(Suddenly the report of a cannon is heard in the square near Westminster.)

SYNDERCOMB (in an undertone to the conspirators).

He comes!

(A second report. Great uproar without in the square. Murmurs of expectation in the hall.)

OVERTON (in an undertone to the conspirators).

To your posts, ye faithful.

(The conspirators scatter through the crowd in such a way as to form a continuous line to the throne. The reports succeed one another at equal intervals, accompanied by fanfares and acclamations. The civic functionaries go out to meet the protector.)

VOICES IN THE CROWD.

Ah! there he is!—'T is he!—Himself!—Ah!—Oh!—The Achan of the nations!—

Pharaoh-Nechao!—He rides alone.—He 's looking at his watch.—The mayor and the sheriffs walk to meet him.—You, sir, who can see, pray tell me how he 's dressed?—All in black velvet.—Neighbor, your elbow 's very sharp.—The mayor doth accost him.—Ah!—The carriage halts.—He makes his speech.—The other nods his head.—He hands him a petition which he passes to Lord Broghill.—Is the mayor speaking still?—Aye.—Will he ever make an end? He 's almost on his knees.—Eunuch of Holofernes! no matter who doth govern, he harangues the same.—Now the protector doth make answer to him. Listen!—Let us listen!—Malediction! 't is the wolf a-preaching to the sheep.—Noll's beard was not so neatly combed at Dunbar.—He alights.—And whither goes he?—To the court of the Lord-Chancellor to pray.—His prayer will be addressed to hell!—Look how he goes, surrounded by his Ironsides!—A vain precaution; for his guards are ill-content to guard a king.—Tush!—Well-a-day! more waiting!—What think you of him?—He 's very grave.—He 's very gay.—Awkward.—Majestic.—Aged.—No, tired out.—The sun did almost overpower him.—I think he has the gout.—This monster, by eight horses drawn, offends my sight. As fitly carry dung in a triumphal chariot.—Now he returns, the Lord be praised! to Westminster.—His sword-bearer is there, and his train-bearer.—See the minister in his blue cloak.—Is it not Lockyer?—Yes.—There go the palace clerks, the sergeants of the court, the pages and the footmen.—The Lord-Mayor goes before his carriage, mounted, sword in air, and with uncovered head.—Unprincipled usurper! he doth imitate the airs of former kings!—Down with him! death to Oliver the Last!—Pray let me look, good master halberdier!—Ah! he is here!

(Cromwell, surrounded by his retinue, appears on the threshold of the great door. A thrill of excitement runs through the assemblage. Everybody rises and stands bareheaded in a respectful attitude. The protector is dressed in black velvet, without cloak or sword. His retinue forms a brilliant circle of gold and glistening steel, some little distance in his rear. Nearest to the protector, in the front rank, is the Lord-Mayor, with drawn sword; behind him Lord Carlisle, also with drawn sword. Among others can be distinguished Generals Desborough and Fletwood, Thurlow, Stoupe, the Secretaries of State, and the confidential secretaries, Richard Cromwell, Hannibal

Sesthead in his gorgeous costume of gold brocade, with his pages and his Danish hounds, and a multitude of generals and colonels, whose showy uniforms and resplendent breastplates contrast sharply with the blue cloak and sober brown suit of the preacher Lockyer. At the right of the door a group of high dignitaries who are to take part in the ceremony, and who bear upon cushions of red velvet, Lord Warwick the purple robe, Lord Broghill the sceptre, General Lambert the crown, Whitelocke the great seal, an alderman, in behalf of the Lord-Mayor, the sword, and a clerk of the House of Commons, in behalf of the Speaker, the Bible.)

SCENE XII

CROMWELL, HIS FAMILY, HIS RETINUE, THE PEOPLE.

(As Cromwell makes his appearance in the doorway, amid the roar of cannon, which has not ceased during the preceding scene, ringing of bells, beating of drums and blowing of trumpets, the shouts which follow his entrance can be heard without.)

VOICES (without).

Huzza for the Lord Protector of England !

OVERTON (in an undertone to Garland).

Yon howlers are well paid. But we will close their mouths. 'T was so when Noll, at Grocers' Hall, did make a baronet of Thomas Viner ; he was applauded for his money as he rode along Cheapside.

(Cromwell halts a moment in the doorway, and bows again and again to the crowd without.)

VOICES IN THE CROWD.

'T is Cromwell !—'T is Cromwell, do you say?—The king !—The regicide !—He 's very ugly !—What a little fellow for a hero !—I 'd have said he was much taller.—Methought he was less stout.—How yonder fellow doth annoy me with his broad-brimmed hat ! Take off your hat !—Who ? I ? Since when, I pray to know, do men take off their hats, my lady, to the antichrist ?

(Cromwell turns and faces the crowd within the hall.
Profound silence.)

VOICES (without).

God save you, Oliver !—Cromwell forever !

(Cromwell turns again and bows to the people in the square.)

THURLOW (in an undertone to Cromwell).

Everything is most auspicious, all bow down to you. What acclamations ! what enthusiasm ! 't is a glorious day !

CROMWELL (in the same tone, bitterly).

Ah yes ! these people, without number, glad at heart and drunk with love, who seem so powerfully to uphold my lofty destiny, could not applaud me less if I were going to the stake. They see in this, my triumph, a brilliant spectacle, they hasten hither and enjoy it to their hearts' content, and naught would please them more in their perfervid transports, than to see me crowned, unless it were to see me hanged. Warm-hearted people ! See how deathly still they are !

THURLOW (in an undertone).

The people have been worked upon by image-breaking saints.

(The members of Parliament, with the Speaker at their head, approach Cromwell, walking two by two. The Speaker bows low to Cromwell, who takes off his hat and puts it on again.)

THE SPEAKER (to Cromwell).

My lord ! When Samuel did offer up a sacrifice, he kept for Saul the shoulder of the sacrificial beast, to show that monarch, 'neath the sacred curtain, that a nation is a heavy burden for a man to bear. And so was Maximilian often heard to say that he was very loath to mount th' imperial throne. There be

few mortals, though they may have triumphed over factions, who are competent to guide the footsteps of a nation. Heavily doth this great chariot in which we ride, roll onward, by events propelled, and laden down with men ; and, for its proper guidance o'er the stony roads, we need a firm and powerful right arm. For oft, when journeying at night beneath a stormy sky, avoiding the deep ruts, the precipice doth yawn beneath our feet. There 's no unharnessing this chariot, the groaning of whose axles the whole world doth hear ; no drag can be put on. It must roll on and on ! The coursers God doth harness to its brazen pole, as mettlesome as on a day of battle, are forever seen to rear and plunge despite the lash, and rush at headlong speed despite the rein ; and, crushing monarchs, nations, capitals, its wheels must follow blindly on their fatal road ! If, haply, 't is allowed to run its course unguided save by chance, the heavy car, in its deep rut, doth shed so much of blood that thirsty dogs do quench their thirst where it hath passed. And thereupon the earth is shaken to its centre and the kingdoms totter to their fall. What zealous care is needful, therefore, when we fain would choose a driver for this cumbrous chariot, whose progress none can view without alarm ! A twofold summons must have called him to the lofty seat. The people's choice must fall upon him with the choice of God ; the diadem be interwoven with the tongue of fire. Then doth he take rank 'mongst those rare mortals whom the nations follow from afar like beacon-lights. That eminence by hard unending toil doth he attain. His eye must keep a vigilant lookout on every side. He 's like unto the suns, which God alone hath power to create ; which in their revolutions move whole worlds, whose peaks are lighted by the rays from heaven ; and which shine on

forever, know no rest ! From this that I have said, the inference is clear that one arm alone can fitly guide the progress of the State. We need a chief who towers far above us all. The world doth need a man ; that man, you are !

(The Parliament and the whole assemblage bend their heads.)

My lord, we do beseech thee, deign to be our guide in good and evil fortune, and to accept the sworn allegiance of your faithful Commons.

(Profound silence in the assemblage.)

OVERTON (in an undertone to Milton).

Of his Commons.

CROMWELL (to the Speaker).

I am much beholden to you. By the grace of the Omnipotent, this empire doth prosper mightily. In Ireland, despite the civil wars, the faith doth hold its onward course, triumphantly invading the chief towns. With vehement attack upon the popish ulcer at its root, doth Harry, my lieutenant, with sword and fire, extirpate with one hand, with the other cauterize. Armagh is burning. Rome no longer hath a proselyte within her walls. The clans in Scotland have returned to their allegiance. All goes well without the kingdom. Dunkirk hath no hope. Old England, hand in hand with France, holds humbled Spain securely in her grasp. Our commerce in the Indies hath made mighty strides ; the envious Castilian doth waste his strength in vain regrets. The Lord by giving aid to us doth show that ours is the righteous cause. At Lisbon and Madrid the rebels have been made to shed much blood, and gold, to pay for their rebellion. Blake their galleons doth drain into our treasury. Two squadrons to Jamaica I have sent. The army, meanwhile, doth regain its former strength. The Tuscan is repentant ; he will be forgiven.

And when all these matters near at hand are happily concluded, we may lend a helping hand to save the Muscovite, since he doth call upon us, from the Sultan's hordes. If we within our hearts do form a wish, God doth fulfill it instantly. In fine, as all may see, no people doth surpass us. Let us then live on with trust assured in the divine beneficence. But, that the Lord may manifest himself to us, we needs must bow the head and bend the knee. Now let us pray, and may the Holy Ghost descend into our midst!

(Cromwell kneels; all his retinue, the members of Parliament, the judges and the soldiers do likewise. A brief interval of silent meditation during which nothing can be heard save the bells and cannon and fanfares, and the clamor of the crowd without.)

SYNDERCOMB (in an undertone to Overton and Garland, who have drawn near the throne).

They are all on their knees, the tyrant and his guards; their swords are lowered. No eye is upon us. Why do we not smite him?

GARLAND (pushing him back indignantly).
God!

SYNDERCOMB.
Why shout so loud?

GARLAND.
To smite him when he prays!

SYNDERCOMB.
What should we do?

GARLAND.
Pray. Pray against him. Let us cry truce to murd'rous frenzy, and leave God to choose betwixt the prayers.

(The Puritan conspirators bow their heads and pray. A pause.)

CROMWELL. (rising).
'T is done!
(The whole assemblage rises. The Earl of Warwick comes forward with slow and measured steps, kneels upon one knee, and presents the purple robe bordered with ermine.)

Deign to assume this purple robe, my lord.
(With Warwick's assistance, Cromwell puts on the robe.)

OVERTON (in an undertone to the Puritans).
My friends! my friends! he dons his winding-sheet.

GARLAND (in an undertone).
I prithee see him now. The scarlet son of Tyre the prostitute.

WILDMAN (in an undertone).
Oh! may the lightning strike him down!
(Cromwell, clad in the purple robe, the train of which is held by young Lord Roberts, richly dressed, walks gravely toward the throne. The Earl of Warwick precedes him with his sword high in air; Lord Carlisle follows him with the point of his sword turned toward the floor.)

SYNDERCOMB (aside).
A gorgeous retinue from hell he borrows! Purple and ermine, gilded noblemen and steel-clad soldiery, a plumed throne, surmounted by a lofty canopy, immodest women, shameless men, pomp, power, triumph, nothing doth he lack. He swims in pride and joy. Ah well! to cause all this to vanish like a dream, the shadow of a passing chariot, the gleam of a drawn sword, what doth the mighty God, what doth the Lord Omnipotent require?

(He presses his dagger against his breast.)
A bit of steel in a poor, miserable sinner's hand.

(Cromwell, having walked slowly across the hall amid profound silence, reaches the foot of the throne and prepares to mount upon it. The conspirators glide through the crowd and surround the platform.)

MILTON (in a stentorian voice from the midst of the crowd).

Cromwell, beware!

CROMWELL (turning about).
Who speaks?

SYNDERCOMB (in an undertone to Garland).

May God confound yon sightless fool, whose voice bids all the world beware!

MILTON.

Beware the Ides of March!

OVERTON (in an undertone to Milton).

Do not divulge our plot.

CROMWELL (to Milton).

Milton, explain yourself.

MILTON.

MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN!

(Cromwell shrugs his shoulders and ascends the throne.)

OVERTON (in an undertone to Garland).

He doth go up! I breathe again.

GARLAND (in an undertone).

The warning was most vehement.

(Cromwell takes his seat upon the throne. Lord Warwick and Lord Carlisle stand, with drawn swords, behind his chair; Thurlow and Stoupe on either side. The Lord-Mayor, followed by the aldermen, goes forward to the foot of the throne, bearing the cushion on which the sword is placed; he ascends several steps, kneels upon one knee, and presents the sword to Cromwell.)

THE LORD-MAYOR.

My lord, I bring and place within your hands the sword. Lacking an anvil, a whole people forged the steel of which 't is made upon the tyrant's brow. The blade has two keen edges, so that one may make of it the sword of justice and the sword of war, which, terrible alike in either place, now flashes in the soldier's hands upon the battle-field, and now within the sanctuary blazes in the hand of God. The venerable city doth present it to you.

(Cromwell girds on the sword, draws it from the sheath and raises it above his head, then returns it to the Lord-Mayor, who replaces it in the sheath, and retires walking backward.)

WHITELOCKE (approaching Cromwell with the same ceremonial as the Lord-Mayor).

My lord, the seals.

(Cromwell takes the seals in his hand, then returns them to Whitelocke, who retires. The Speaker, followed by the officials of the House of Commons, comes forward, bearing the Bible with golden clasps.)

THE SPEAKER (with one knee on the floor).

My lord, the Holy Book.

(Cromwell takes the Bible and the Speaker retires, bowing low. General Lambert, with pale and troubled face, draws near, bearing the crown upon a rich cushion of crimson velvet. Overton forces his way through the crowd, and stands beside him.)

GENERAL LAMBERT (kneeling on the steps leading to the platform).

My lord . . .

OVERTON (in an undertone to Lambert).

'T is I! have courage!

LAMBERT (aside).

He is at my side!

(To Cromwell in faltering tones.)

My lord, receive this crown . . .

OVERTON (drawing his dagger, in an undertone to Lambert).

And with it death!

(All the conspirators, who are scattered through the crowd, put their hands to their daggers at the same moment.)

CROMWELL (as if suddenly aroused from sleep).

Stay! What means this? Wherefore this crown? What would you that I do with it? and who doth give it me? Is it a dream? Is it in very truth the crown I see before me? By what right am I with kings confounded? Who dares thus cast obloquy upon our pious festival? How now! their crown, to me who caused their heads to fall! Do you mistake the purpose of this solemn ceremonial? My lords and gentlemen, ye Englishmen, my brothers, who do hear my voice, I come not

hither to assume the diadem, but that my title may be ratified here in the bosom of my people, my power reconstituted, and my rights renewed. The sacred scarlet was twice dyed. This purple is the people's, and with loyal heart I here declare that by their will alone I wear it. But the royal crown! when sought I it? and who can say that I do wish for it? I would not give one of these locks of mine, these locks grown gray in England's service, for all the golden frippery of all the princes of the earth. Away with it! Out of my sight this bauble, vainest of all vanities! nor wait till I do crush the paltry thing beneath my feet! How little do they know me, those false-dealing knaves who dare affront me to the point of offering the crown! From God I have received far more than they can give, irrevocable grace; and I am my own master. Once a son of heaven, can one lay aside his sonship? The whole universe doth envy our prosperity. And what care I for aught beyond the happiness of all? This people is the chosen people. Europe is the humble satellite of this proud island. Everywhere the nations bow before our star; the impious mortal is accursed. 'T would seem, from all that's gone before, as if the Lord had said: "Wax great, O England! be my eldest child. My hands have crowned thee queen among the nations; be my best-beloved, and march ever at my side." Abundant blessings on our heads he doth outpour; each day that dawns, each day that draweth to a close, adds a new link to the unending chain. 'T would seem that the Lord God, a terrifying scourge to Philistines, hath like a skillful workman chiseled out our destiny; that his strong arm hath built the parts of this vast edifice upon an axis indestructible by time; mysterious work! whereby the mechanism has, for centuries mayhap, been kept in motion. So the work goes

on. The pinion, fastened to the wheel, bites with its iron teeth the hurrying machine; the massive balance-wheels, the springs, the weights, a living labyrinth, all move in unison; the terrifying engine, without rest, pursues its own inexorable course, performs its mighty task, and, taken in its thousand arms, whole nations would be ground to dust and disappear, if they stood not aside. And I, forsooth, would fain hold God in leash, whose salutary law ordains for us a destiny apart in the world's destiny! I, the people's choice, would trample under foot their ancient privileges, substitute my interest for theirs! I, the pilot, would expose the ship of State to adverse winds!

(Shaking his head.)

Nay, nay, I'll not afford such matter for rejoicing to the false brethren. The old English bark still rules the waves. The vast colossus still doth stand erect. What boots it that obscure conspiracies are formed against Great Britain's lofty destiny? What recks the mountain of the mattock blow upon its iron flank?

(Casting his lynx's eyes over the assemblage.)

Beware, ye workers of iniquity! your schemes are known. The torrent is transparent, though the abyss be deep. We see the bottom of the pit wherein your minds do crawl. Sometimes the viper wounds itself with its own sting; he who doth set alight the fire oft doth burn himself thereat; the Lord's all-seeing eyes move swiftly here and there. Whose hand signed the divorce between the people and their kings? 'T was mine. And think ye then to lure me with this paltry bait? A diadem! A Briton, I of yore did shatter it. Although I ne'er did wear it, well I know its weight. Abandon for a court the camp which doth surround me? barter for a sceptre my good sword, my

helmet for a crown? Go to! Am I a child? was I born yesterday? Know I not that gold is heavier than steel? Build me a throne? Why 't is to dig my grave. Too well doth Cromwell know how one doth fall therefrom, to dream of mounting it. And then, how soon doth deathly weariness bring wrinkles on the brow, with flowers of gold bedight! Each flower doth conceal a piercing thorn. The crown 's a fatal burden; black care saps the life of him who it doth wear. The gentlest mortal by it is transformed into a tyrant; bearing heavily upon the king, it causes him to bear as heavily upon his subjects. They gaze in admiration on the diadem, and, abdicating their own power, count the precious stones with which it gleams. But with what horror of the burden they would shudder, looked they at the brow, not at the crown. The fardel doth confuse the brain, and in the sovereign's hands the reins that guide the tottering state ere long are hopelessly entangled. Take away the execrable, hateful emblem! All too often doth the fillet fall upon the eyes.

(Weeping.)

In sooth, what should I do with it? By birth ill-fitted for great power, I am simple-hearted and I live in innocence. If, sling in hand, I have kept watch upon the sheepfold, if, amid the breakers, I my stand have taken at the helm, 't was for the common weal that I did thus expend my strength. Alas! that I did not live out my days in my own lowly station! Alas! that I did not watch from afar the downfall of the hard-pressed tyrant, standing in the shadow of my humble cot and little wood! Heaven is my witness, I would have preferred those fields, where one can breathe, to the o'erwhelming cares of empire; and Cromwell would have found more true delight a hundredfold in tending

sheep than in dethroning kings! What say you of the sceptre? I have thrown away my life. This piece of glittering metal hath no charms for me. Have pity on me, brethren, far from being envious of your old general, of your old Oliver. I feel my arm grow feeble and my end is near. Have I not labored at the chain full long? Now I am old and weary, and I cry for mercy. Is it not time, in truth, that I should seek repose? Each day do I invoke the grace divine, and beat my breast before the Lord. And I would fain be king! Frail mortal that I am, and proud! This project, I would swear to it beside my open grave, is far more strange to me, my brethren, than the sunlight to the child within its mother's womb! Away with this new power placed within my grasp! I 'll none of it—save the heredity. I purpose presently to summon a divine, a luminary of the church, that he may read my heart. I will consult, if need be, two upon this point. I needs must render an account to the Most High, touching your liberties, and therein, making of his law my law supreme, it is my purpose to fulfill that which is writ in Psalm One Hundred Ten.

(Acclamation and applause break out on all sides. People and soldiers, whose hostility has been gradually dissipated by Cromwell's harangue, give free play to their enthusiasm. Visible stupefaction among the members of Parliament and the protector's retinue. Cromwell draws himself up and makes a commanding gesture, whereat every voice is hushed.)

With this, will we pray God, with humble and submissive heart, that he will have you in his holy keeping, friends. We have laid bare our heart before you, and do crave your pardon, last of all, for having, on so hot a day, harangued you at such length.

(He resumes his seat. The enthusiastic acclamations of the people break out again with renewed vigor. The disconcerted Puritan conspirators maintain a gloomy silence and throw away their daggers.)

OVERTON (in an undertone to Garland).

He 'll die in his bed.

GARLAND (in an undertone).

They want him, and they have him!

THE CROWD.

Huzza!

WILDMAN (in an undertone).

His title is hereditary none the less! Vile mountebank!

THE CROWD.

Hail! England's Lord Protector! Long live Oliver Cromwell! Long life and glory to the conqueror of Tyre!

OVERTON (in an undertone to the Puritans).

How he hath overreached us! Some one must have warned him. Aye, some one hath played us false! 't is rank apostasy.

BAREBONES (aside).

There was no other way to save my property.

(The greater part of the conspirators scatter among the people, who continue to salute the triumphant Cromwell with noisy acclamations. Lambert, pale and spell-bound, prepares to descend from the platform; Cromwell detains him.)

CROMWELL.

Lambert, you will dine with us to-day.

(In an undertone, as Lambert turns about in speechless confusion.)

Why tremble still? He is no longer there.

LAMBERT (in a faltering voice).

Who?

CROMWELL (still in an undertone).

Overton, who was to guide thy faltering hand.

(With a sardonic smile.)

For you were of the plot.

LAMBERT.

My lord, I swear . . .

CROMWELL.

Swear nothing.

LAMBERT.

But, my lord . . .

CROMWELL.

You were the leader. I have witnesses.

LAMBERT.

The leader!

CROMWELL.

Aye, in name at least. Albeit you were frightened at your own audacity, and never would have dared to stab me face to face.

LAMBERT.

My lord!

(Aside.)

There 's not a man but wears his thoughts plain-written on his forehead for this tyrant with his swift, unerring glance.

CROMWELL (aloud to Lambert, with a smile).

My lord, have I been told aright? An injudicious friend will have it that your tastes incline to a retired life. They say that you are fond of passion flowers.

(In an undertone, grinding his teeth.)

You will forthwith hand me your commission.

(He dismisses him with a wave of the hand. Lambert descends from the platform, and mingles with the protector's retinue. At that moment Cromwell spies the sceptre which Lord Broghill has deposited on the steps of the throne.)

What is this? a sceptre? Take away the bauble!

(Turning to Trick.)

'T is for thee, my fool!

(Renewed acclamations among the people and the troops.)

TRICK.

Not so, 't will be some greater fool than I who meddles with it.

(Enters a city official. He bows low and addresses Cromwell.)

THE OFFICIAL.

My lord, the sheriff of the city is without.

CROMWELL.

Admit him.

(Enters the sheriff, followed by two sergeants-at-arms.)

CROMWELL (to the sheriff).

Well?

THE SHERIFF (bowing).

Good, my lord, Bloum and the other prisoners condemned to death . . .

CROMWELL (with a start).

Is it all over?

THE SHERIFF.

No, my lord, not yet.

CROMWELL.

'T is well.

THE SHERIFF.

Hewlet ere break of day their gallows did erect at Tyburn. They do crave an audience of you, my lord, as they are taken to the fatal spot. Must we accede, or must we say them nay?

CROMWELL.

What motive do they state?

THE SHERIFF.

That they have a request to make.

CROMWELL.

Ah well! let them be brought before me.

THE SHERIFF.

Here, my lord?

CROMWELL.

Aye, here.

(At a sign from Cromwell, the sheriff bows and exit. Cromwell remains for some time silent amid the acclamations of the people and the whispering of the generals and the members of Parliament. Suddenly he throws off his apathy and addresses Doctor Lockyer, who is standing in the midst of his retinue.)

I prithee, Master Lockyer, did we not make choice of you to edify us with the holy word?

We wait for you. Time flies, and grace divine doth spread its wings.

(Doctor Lockyer, slowly and with evident embarrassment, ascends the pulpit facing the throne.)

DOCTOR LOCKYER.

My lord, this is my text . . .

(He hesitates, and seems confused.)

CROMWELL.

Say on, say on.

DOCTOR LOCKYER (reading from a Bible which he holds in his hand).

"The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, 'Reign thou over us.'"

CROMWELL (interrupting him, angrily).

Brother, where find you that? 'T is a bold text.

LOCKYER.

My lord, I find it in the Bible.

CROMWELL.

Where?

LOCKYER (handing him the Bible).

See for yourself. In JUDGES, chapter nine, verse eight.

CROMWELL.

Be silent! pray what pertinency hath that text to this conjuncture? Do we read nothing better in the Holy Scriptures? Could you not find a verse that bore some relevancy to the late occurrences? For instance, hark to this: "Accursed be he who doth misguide the sightless wanderer!" "The truly wise doth dare and doubt." "The archangel did bind the demon in the desert." There be other subjects, too, the which a learned orator might take in hand, and present circumstances would have raised their value and increased their interest. "Has man a twofold nature?" "Do God's angels, when they come among us, change their substance?" "What would

come to pass, if, dogmatists in very truth, the whiggamores were antipædobaptists?" There are subjects which are comprehensible, to say the least. For the instruction of this great and pious people, you might treat these questions and a score of others! Ah! it wearies me to hear these college preachers talking through their nose, and praising in the same dry tone the sun, the moon, and my lord Eglinton! Begone!

(Renewed acclamations. Lockyer descends from the pulpit in confusion, and loses himself in the crowd. Enters an usher, who halts on the threshold of the great door, and announces:)

The prisoners, my lord.

CROMWELL.

Let them come in.

(Enter the cavaliers. Lord Ormond at their head. They are preceded by the sheriff, and surrounded by archers and sergeants-at-arms.)

SCENE XIII

THE SAME: LORD ORMOND, LORD ROCHESTER, LORD CLIFFORD, LORD ROSEBERY, LORD DROGHEDA, SIR PETER DOWNIE, SEDLEY, SIR WILLIAM MURRAY, DOCTOR JENKINS, MANASSEH-BEN-ISRAEL, all bare-footed, with their hands bound behind their backs, and ropes about their necks. The SHERIFF, ARCHERS and SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS.

(As the cavaliers enter, the people stand aside to make room for them, with murmurs of astonishment and curiosity.)

THE SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS.

Room! room!

(The cavaliers halt before the throne on which Cromwell sits, Ormond and Rochester in the front rank. They maintain a resolute and tranquil attitude; Murray and Manasseh alone seem to be beside themselves with fear. Cromwell lets his eyes wander contentedly over the prisoners for some few moments, and looks from them to the assemblage, seeming to enjoy the anxious silence which prevails. Throughout the scene Rochester makes eyes at Frances, whom he spies upon the gallery as he enters.)

CROMWELL (folding his arms, to the cavaliers).

What is your wish?

(Aside.)

If they should sue for pardon!

LORD ORMOND (in a firm voice).

We are men of heart, and seek not mercy, pity, favors or forgiveness. They who die for such a cause as ours go proudly forth to meet their doom. Naught have they to annoy them or to mock their self-esteem. And what should we expect, when all is said, from you, a murderer, a vassal, who doth burden his plebeian 'scutcheon with the hereditary crest and sceptre, and doth quarter thereupon the arms of England?

CROMWELL (interrupting him).

What d' ye wish with me?

LORD ORMOND.

A single word. By what road are we to begin our journey heavenward? You take us to the gallows; know you who we are?

CROMWELL.

Brigands condemned to death.

LORD ORMOND.

Nay, gentlemen. Doubtless you know it not, and we do tell it you. The gallows was not made for men who bear our names, and, though your own nobility be of the pettiest, the cord which doth dishonor us inflicts no less a stain on you. 'Twixt men of taste and quality there's no such thing as hanging. We do claim our right.

CROMWELL.

And is that all?

(Aside.)

They ask for life!

LORD ORMOND.

Aye. Weigh it well.

CROMWELL.

What is your wish in God's name?

LORD ORMOND.

That our heads be taken off. Vanish the gallows and the gross indignity! We have the right to be decapitated, one and all.

CROMWELL (in an undertone to Thurlow).

Strange men! Observe their attitude. No fear, no shame. Their pride doth mount the scaffold with them. To eternity their prejudices bear them company; and in their eyes the block is honorable!

(To the cavaliers, with a mocking smile.)

I understand. To you 't is of vast moment that the folding doors of heaven be thrown open to their full extent at your approach; and 't would be too great honor for an unclean hempen cord to choke a high and mighty nobleman. And yet such things have happened. In your ranks, my masters, there are some who might be hanged without offense to their forefathers, for they have none. Yonder Jew, and yonder magistrate.

DOCTOR JENKINS.

I've not been tried. You have no power to inflict a fine, imprisonment or death upon me. I am free; and in the Norman charter thus I read: *Nullus homo liber imprisonetur*.

LORD ROCHESTER (laughing, to Sedley).

Gad! does he propose to cite the laws of Arthur's time?

CROMWELL (to the cavaliers).

We have you in our hands; all, leader and lieutenants and accomplices! You all were caught in your own trap. Your hour has struck, the arm is raised on high to punish. You choose ill your time to seek for favors.

LORD ORMOND (interrupting him).

Favors, sirrah! God forbid! We claim a right inherent in the nobility of England. Do you hear? a right! Favors, forsooth! a block? a fillip with an axe?

CROMWELL.

Peace, you who speak so loud! Last night, with sword in hand, you made your way into

my house, seduced the guard or cozened them, and thought unseen to seize me in my bed. What fate had you in store for me?

LORD ORMOND.

'T was not the gallows, be assured.

CROMWELL.

Aye, you had need of haste. The dagger does its work more speedily. And now that Heaven casts you all into my hands, my would-be murderers, what do you ask from me?

LORD ORMOND.

To die as true knights should; to die for our king.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Yes, let us die for Rowland!

(In an undertone to Rosebery.)

I am forever making loans to him. My money yesterday, to-day my head. One debt the more for him to settle!

CROMWELL (after a moment's reflection, to Lord Ormond).

Be yourself the judge, old man. Had chance cast me in chains, and put you in my place, what would you do?

LORD ORMOND.

I would not pardon.

CROMWELL.

I do pardon you.

(Murmurs of astonishment from the assemblage.)

ALL THE CAVALIERS.

What!

CROMWELL.

You are free.

LORD ORMOND.

Great God!

(To Cromwell.)

If you did know my name . . .

CROMWELL (interrupting him).

It doth not interest me.

(In an undertone to Thurlow.)

If he gives his name I would not answer for the people.

(He turns suddenly to Lord Broghill, who has thus far maintained a gloomy silence among those in attendance upon Cromwell.)

One of your old friends, Lord Broghill, is in London.

(Ormond and Broghill turn in amazement.)

LORD BROGHILL.

Who, my lord, I prithee?

CROMWELL.

Ormond.

LORD BROGHILL.

Ormond!

(Aside.)

Heaven! can he know?

CROMWELL.

Five days he hath been here, dear Broghill.

(He feels in his doublet and produces the sealed packet taken from Davenant.)

Look you, here 's a package of great interest to him. His name is on the cover. Know you his address?

LORD BROGHILL (anxiously).

I know it not, my lord.

CROMWELL.

Bloum, Rat Hotel, Strand.

LORD BROGHILL (confusedly).

Why . . .

LORD ORMOND (aside, scrutinizing the packet in Cromwell's hand).

Davenant 's the traitor; 't is the king's letter.

CROMWELL (handing the packet to Broghill).

Give it to Lord Ormond as from me. This letter, falling into other hands, might well

have compromised him. Bid him go hence at the earliest moment, and think not of coming back. If he has need of money, give it him.

LORD ROSEBERY (in an undertone to Ormond).

Money! ah! what a lucky man you are! If he would offer me no more than a mere guaranty to pay my debts!

LORD ROCHESTER (in an undertone, congratulating Ormond).

'T was honorably done, and I am overjoyed that he doth spare you the affront of calling you by name.

CROMWELL (in a loud, harsh voice).

Lord Rochester!

LORD ROCHESTER (starting in surprise).

What now?

CROMWELL.

You have your pardon. Go you to the devil!

LORD ROCHESTER (in an undertone to Rosebery).

He is far less scrupulous with me. No matter! he 's a very Proteus! a sorcerer. Accost him, and you think you see a royal lion. Even so; essay to rock him off to sleep. Bst! one touch of the wand, and lo! the sleeping lion is a cat that has his eyes upon you; soon the cat becomes a roaring tiger; then the tiger's claw becomes a paw of velvet; velvet, be it said, through which the cunning claw still shows at times.

CROMWELL.

My learned chaplain, suffer me to bid you not to stay too long among us.

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Faith, I do believe you!

CROMWELL (continuing).

Holy man, by virtue of more laws than one, most righteous laws, to swear in England costs

one dear. Now you, whatever be your trade, could not keep silent, and would waste your substance speedily in profane swearing, being called upon to pay a fine at almost every moment of the day.

LORD ROCHESTER.

Thanks for the good advice.

(To the people who pursue him with derisive laughter.)

Applaud, ye hounds!

CROMWELL.

Stay, doctor. Take your wife.

LORD ROCHESTER (trembling).

My wife!

CROMWELL.

My lady Rochester!

(Dame Guggligoy descends precipitately from the gallery where the protectress is seated, and throws herself on Rochester's neck. Hooting in the crowd.)

DAME GUGGLIGOY (embracing Rochester).

Dear husband!

LORD ROCHESTER (trying to release himself).

God be merciful!

CROMWELL.

Be one. What should we say to see one half depart without the other?

(To Dame Guggligoy.)

Follow your dear spouse.

(Dame Guggligoy takes Rochester's arm; he submits with ill grace.)

LORD ROCHESTER (aside).

Ah! Wilmot, what an amnesty for thee! Say, art thou not of all the greatest fool and most severely punished? Observe the ludicrous effect of the two halves of thee, one in this rig, the other with that face! And Frances looking on! I' faith, 't will make me virtuous!

CROMWELL (pointing to Sir William Murray, as he stands in the group of cavaliers).

Murray, go thou and take the flogging that Charles Stuart, commonly called Prince of Wales, hath earned for this boy's plot, so woefully miscarried!

(Applause among the people. The archers and bailiffs seize upon Murray, who hides his face in his hands and seems overwhelmed with shame and despair. Cromwell addresses the rabbi.)

This Jew, who would have well adorned the gallows, is a free man . . .

(Manasseh raises his head joyfully. Cromwell continues, turning to Barebones, who stands beside the throne.)

But, Barebones, to redeem his life, he'll settle thy account.

(Barebones takes from his pocket a long roll and hands it to Manasseh.)

MANASSEH (running his eye over the document).

'T is very dear.

CROMWELL (to the other prisoners).

You all are free.

(The archers unbind them.)

THURLOW (in an undertone to Cromwell).

All? 'T is a serious affair, nathless . . .

CROMWELL (in an undertone).

I have the people on my side; of what avail are half a score of gibbets?

(Murray, as the archers are leading him away, falls on his knees, and holds his clasped hands toward Cromwell.)

SIR WILLIAM MURRAY.

Mercy, my lord!

CROMWELL.

What! from the scourge? Go to! let us have done with it. Pray is it not the business of thy sycophantic back? Scourged for thy king! Thou servest the good cause.

Thou 'lt call thyself a martyr! thou mayest play Montrose!

(He waves his hand and the archers drag Murray away. The protector thereupon addresses the crowd with an imperious and inspired air.)

O blessed people, let us spare our crawling enemies. The elephant in pity doth forbear to crush the serpent. Thus may Heaven always shield you from the lurking foe, ye chosen vessels!

LORD ROCHESTER (in an undertone to Sedley).

Faith, the vessels are mere earthen pitchers.⁵

(The people respond to the protector's words with loud and long-continued applause. He silences them with a gesture and resumes.)

CROMWELL.

'T is my purpose, Englishmen, to signalize this day by acts of clemency.

(To the sheriff.)

Let Carr, a prisoner at the Tower, be brought hither.

(Exit the sheriff. Cromwell rests his elbow on the arm of his chair, and with his head on his hand seems to meditate. The assemblage awaits further developments in silence. Willis, who has been absent for some time, and has just returned, accosts Ormond.)

SIR RICHARD WILLIS (saluting Ormond).

I give you joy, my lord.

LORD ORMOND (amazed).

What! Willis, is it you? You, too, are free! The man is an insoluble enigma! He doth take upon himself the functions of a king to grant us pardon thus.

(Pressing Willis's hand.)

But I do give him thanks, on your behalf, if not my own.

(He puts his mouth to Willis's ear with an air of mystery.)

Davenant 's the traitor! Ah! if I do but fall in with him!

SIR RICHARD WILLIS.

Nay, think you so? It may be or may not. Distrust him! Having once escaped the peril, be more prudent.

LORD ORMOND (pressing his hand once more).

Willis! ah! how we have been deceived!

CROMWELL (emerging from his fit of abstraction, and pointing out the cavaliers to Stoupe).

Stoupe, to-morrow let these madmen, from all penalty exempt, take boat upon the Thames.

(He turns abruptly to Sir Hannibal Sesthead, who is displaying his gorgeous costume on the steps leading to the throne.)

Sir Hannibal Sesthead! though you be cousin to a king, I'd have you know that I do purpose to be master in my own domain. Your morals are not exemplary; you have acquired habits in the courts of other lands quite out of keeping with the habits of the chosen people. Take them elsewhere. Go, and sin no more.

HANNIBAL SESTHEAD (aside).

He pardons a conspiracy and not a sarcasm. I alone am punished.

(Exit with his pages and dogs. The crowd hoots him and applauds Cromwell.)

OVERTON (in an undertone to Garland).

See the vast enthusiasm of the people. An harangue, an empty word or two, have changed them utterly.

LORD ROCHESTER (in an undertone to Rosebery).

The Lord against the lord protector hath protected us. Rest we content with that.

GARLAND (in an undertone to Overton).

He struck down all our weapons with a word.

CROMWELL (spying Gramadoch, surrounded by his guards).

What doth my fool surrounded by four archers yonder?

GRAMADOCH (boldly).

They are fool-keepers.

AN ARCHER.

The presumptuous dwarf, my lord, picked up your gauntlet.

CROMWELL (angrily to Gramadoch).

Knave!

GRAMADOCH.

None but a fool, my lord, could e'er have done it.

CROMWELL (smiling, and motioning to the archers to release him).

Go!

(Gramadoch joins his companions in their retreat, and is received with demonstrations of delight. Meanwhile the protector addresses Milton.)

Is Milton satisfied?

MILTON.

He waits.

CROMWELL.

My brother, I am well content with you. Speak therefore. Have you aught to ask at my hands?

MILTON.

Yes.

CROMWELL.

What might it be?

MILTON.

A favor.

CROMWELL.

Friend, say on, 't is granted.

MILTON.

All your enemies your Highness doth forgive. One only is forgotten.

CROMWELL.

Who, I prithee?

MILTON.

Davenant.

CROMWELL.

What say you? Davenant! The papist! A spy in the king's pay! Ask something else.

MILTON.

Ah! bear with me if I insist. He was of the conspiracy, beyond a doubt; 't is true he is a papist; he did plot your death; but you have pardoned these.

CROMWELL.

I cannot.

MILTON.

Well I know that he was privy to these schemes, but . . .

CROMWELL (testily).

Say no more about it! he makes comedies. (Milton, disappointed, turns away. Cromwell in a milder tone recalls him.)

It has seemed good to us to name you, Milton, poet laureate.

MILTON.

Poet laureate! My lord, save in reversion, I cannot accept. The office is not vacant.

CROMWELL (astonished).

Who, I pray to know, has seized upon it?

MILTON.

Davenant.

CROMWELL (shrugging his shoulders).

'T was given him by James the First!

MILTON.

If he must wear his chains, his laurel let us leave to him.

CROMWELL.

True poet's logic. Phrases cubits long! Thou euphuist! And thou, forsooth, wouldst make thyself a law to governors of states and scold unceasingly, thou who dost pass thy days distorting words to paltry metres.

MILTON.

Solomon composed five thousand parables.

(Cromwell turns his back upon him and motions to his son Richard to approach.)

CROMWELL (to Richard).

Richard—my heir—'t is meet that I should presently throw open to you a career in Parliament and in the army. I do make you colonel, peer of England, and member of the Privy Council.

RICHARD CROMWELL (saluting his father with some embarrassment).

But—the duties of a peer—my tastes.—You are my lord and father, and by so much honor I am overwhelmed. Nathless, and by your

leave, I dare to say that I e'en now have more than I deserve or crave. I love the woods and meadows and a life of ease; I love to hunt the roebuck and the stag; and I hold to my fields, where I do fear no rising save among my falcons and my hounds.

(Cromwell, displeased and disconcerted, dismisses him with a gesture.)

CROMWELL (bitterly, aside).

Would that the other were the elder! Ah! of what avail is all that I may do?

(Enters Carr with the sheriff. He walks slowly through the crowd, glances indignantly at the royal trappings which surround him, and goes forward gravely to the throne.)

SCENE XIV

THE SAME : CARR.

CARR (folding his arms and looking Cromwell in the face).

What wouldst thou with me? Tyrant by virtue of thy crimes, do prison walls afford no shelter 'gainst thee? What wouldst thou with me, apostate? renegade, what wouldst thou?

VOICES IN THE CROWD.

Hold thy peace, madman !

CROMWELL (to the people).

Let him speak, my friends. The Lord doth purpose to put David to the test, wherefore he hath permitted Semei's son to curse him.

(To Carr.)

Go on.

CARR.

Aye, hypocrite ! 't is thy invariable artifice. Thy cunning schemes to cloak with fair professions ! o'er thy hell-born brow to throw the heavens' veil ! to mock while torturing ! to put a gloss on tyranny ! and to pour out thy bitter irony upon a bleeding heart ! So be it ; but the Lord hath kept me hidden in his quiver, to the end that I might shatter at one blow thy sceptre and thy mask. He said to me : " Go, take thy lute, and hover round about the city ; drive the servile people forth from Cromwell's temple, grind to dust the altar, cast the idol to the flames, and say to them : ' The Egyptian is a man and not a God ! ' " And there thou sittest, Cromwell, on thy throne of glory ! Tremble ! to the

radiant day succeeds the sunless night. Remember Nimrod. The triumphant Lord of Hosts did snap his iron bow like a child's toy. Remember Ishbosheth. That vain and foolish monarch was the first who made the people stand aside as he passed by ; an hundred of the warriors of Issachar on gallant steeds did ever ride before his chariot. But 't is God's law,—the thought strikes terror to the soul—that good to evil fortune doth give birth as flame doth end in ashes. So Ishbosheth fell, like unripe fruit, or like a sound, borne onward by the wind, that leaves no echo. Think of Salmanasar. On his fleet steeds, this king, surrounded by the giant argyraspides, passed on, e'en as a flash of lightning on a summer eve, beneath a cloudless sky—nor was his thunder audible. Think of Sennacherib, who from Assyria led down a warlike host ; nine hundred thousand troops, so proud and so inflamed with thirst for battle that their fiery breath might well have driven clouds across the sky ; unclean magicians ; terrifying centaurs ; Arabs clashing their sonorous cymbals ; oxen and wild leopards broken to the rein ; war-chariots begirt with brazen scythes ; high-mettled horses, to whom tigresses had given suck ; six hundred elephants, perambulating fortresses, which plodded slowly on among the legions, bearing towers on their monstrous backs. On every side were camels, zebras, mammoths,

giant hounds, and buffaloes, prodigious monsters of a bygone age; a howling Saturnalia, through which the gold-encrusted chariots with steel-toothed wheels passed to and fro. At night the camp was like unto a plain on fire; and when th' innumerable host awoke, the fisher, launching his frail shallop, seemed to hear the far-off roaring of the mighty waterfall. Around the haughty monarch all was splendor and magnificence; his blooded mares flew like the wind and trampled 'neath their hoofs the waving grass. And on he rode, his crown-encircled brow supreme, upon his chariot colossal, drawn by elephants; and everywhere were flags and oriflammes and banners, like the meteors which draw a golden shower in their train. But Heaven had compassion on twenty trembling nations. God did breathe upon that gleaming meteor, and suddenly the awe-inspiring prodigy went out, as 't were a candle in the hands of a poor widow keeping vigil. Dost thou deem thyself, infatuated sycophant, a greater man than these great kings, the planets of the eastern world? Canst thou, at thy good pleasure, like the soaring eagle, pounce upon Damascus, Charchemish, Samaria or Calanus? Hast thou demolished Succoth-Benoth or Tiglath-Pileser as the fierce blast destroyeth the bazaar? Or have thy horses and thy chariots, tumultuous horde, disturbed the solitude of ancient Libanus? Not so. Thy arm, which gives the law to sundry potentates, hath changed the boundaries of their domains; the vulgar herd recoils and draws together when thou dost appear; and like a bird of prey thou holdest in thy talons a whole world, and that is all. In thy great battles, in thy onward progress, God sustains thee from above, the people from below. Thou 'rt nothing by thyself. An instrument of wrath, naught but the flail thou art that threshes out

the grain upon the threshing-floor. Where are the gods of Hamath? where the gods of Ivah? What is Sepharvaim when Jehovah hath laid hands upon it? Those idols had their day; and thou wilt pass as they did, like the tinkling bell depending from the camel's neck. Ere long the saints will fold their cloak once more. Gad, Azur, Zebulun, and Benjamin and Naphtali will stand upon Mount Ebal to fling curses at thee. Women and young children will pursue thee with their mocking laughter. To thy faltering feet, thy eyes which hell makes blind, the heavens will be of bronze, the earth of iron. Thy haughty eyelids now do close in sleep upon a bed of royal purple, but the Lord will bruise thy head between two stones, and some day we shall see the people, great at last, stone tyrants with thy whitened bones. For Cromwell, more than once ere now the world hath seen, upon their impious thrones, Egyptian Pharaohs, Sultans of Ethiopia, popes, dukes and emperors, empurpled despots, playing a bloody game with tortured peoples; but, 'mongst all the scourges God hath visited upon us, Cromwell, never has a man, satrap or sovereign, so bold and cruel and astute as thou, been seen beneath the sun that shines in heaven! Be accursed!

CROMWELL.

Pray, have you finished?

CARR.

Nay, not yet. Be thou accursed at sunset and at dawn! be thou accursed in thy fleet steeds and in thy chariot! and in thy arms of wood and arms of steel!

CROMWELL.

Is that all?

CARR.

In the breeze that blows upon thee! in the sky above thy bed! and in the threshold of thy door! be thou accursed!

CROMWELL.

And is that all?

CARR.

No. Be accursed!

CROMWELL.

You 'll strain your lungs. Is that the end? Hark ye. You are imprisoned, having long since fallen out of favor. Brother, I do pardon you. Go hence. I break your fetters.

CARR.

Tyrant, by what right? Dost thou not do iniquity enough each year? Wouldst thou still increase the schedule of thy crimes? Why dost thou storm my refuge with thy catapult? What! thou wouldst tear me from the dungeon where my home has been! I prithee, didst thou forge my fetters, that thou dost assume to strike them off? Thou sayest thou dost pardon me! Abhorrent despot! like thy wrath, 't is fated that thy clemency should blast its object! I was cast in prison by the Long Parliament. I had well earned my fate by treason: I had cast aside the sacred yoke and caused the spoils to be divided. I have paid the penalty. I live in a dark tower whence iron bars shut out the light of day; about my bed the spider weaves his slender web, wherein the bat doth find his wing involved; at night I hear the earth-worms crawling; I am hungry and athirst; in summer I am tortured by the heat, in winter by the cold. And 't is well done. I bow my head, and set a fit example to be followed. But by what right dost thou lay hands upon the temple, Oliver? Is it for thee to change a single stone? That which the saints have done, canst thou undo? Moreover, can the traces of the thunderbolt be washed away? The saints condemned me, and the saints alone have power to absolve me; and I walk with pride amid this servile mob, the only living remnant of their lost authority. A

pine-tree, blasted by the lightning, at the bottom of the precipice I show the glorious scar upon my prostrate brow. And thou wouldst break my chains by force! O Englishmen, what an unbridled tyrant is this man who tramples you beneath his feet! I, Carr, who do defy thee to thy face, prefer the necklet of the captive to the collar of the slave. What do I say? I much prefer my lot to thy high destiny, my tower to thy booty-laden palace. I would not exchange the punishment I suffer for thy crime, my lawful chains for thy usurped sceptre! For, when we are dead, both evil-doers, God will reckon up thy crimes, and give effect to my remorse. Consign me to my cell once more! Or else, if thou wouldst set me free—in very truth—restore the equilibrium of the state, restore the Parliament. Then, we will see. Then thou wilt come with me; with heads bowed down, a cord around our waists, our faces in the dust, together we will go and pray for pardon at his feet. Until that day so long and earnestly desired, Cromwell, give me back my chains; at least respect my liberty.

(Loud laughter among the people.)

Call off thy dogs! I, in my dungeon, am the only Englishman whose master thou art not; the only free man in all England! Cromwell, I do curse thee; both of us, myself and thee, I offer as a sacrifice to God on high. My prison! thou dost vainly seek to force me thence. My prison! and if I must needs invoke profane laws, worldly phrases, thither I return by virtue of the right of *habeas corpus*.

CROMWELL.

As you will! He doth invoke a law that naught can override.

TRICK (from the jesters' box).

His prison! he mistakes; he means to say his box.

SYNDERCOMB (in an undertone to Garland).
Carr is the only man among us all.

VOICES IN THE CROWD.

Hosannah ! Glory to the saints ! Glory to
Christ the Lord ! Glory to the God of Sinai !
—Long life to the protector !

(Syndercomb, roused to frenzy by Carr's imprecations
and the applause of the crowd, draws his dagger,
and rushes toward the throne.)

SYNDERCOMB (waving his dagger).
Death to the King of Sodom !

LORD CARLISLE (to the halberdiers).
Seize the assassin !

CROMWELL (waving back the soldiers).
Nay, give place to him.
(To Syndercomb.)
What seek you ?

SYNDERCOMB.
Thy death.

CROMWELL.
Go hence in peace, and free.

SYNDERCOMB.
I am th' avenger sent by God. If thy base
menials closed not my mouth . . .

CROMWELL (making a sign to the soldiers to leave
him at liberty).

Say on.

SYNDERCOMB.
Ah ! not by speech art thou to be attacked.
But held they not my arm . . .

CROMWELL.
Strike.
SYNDERCOMB (stepping forward and raising his
dagger).

Then perish, tyrant.
(The crowd rush upon him and disarm him.)

VOICES IN THE CROWD.

'Sdeath ! by murder he doth render thanks
for pardon ! Perish the assassin ! death to
the parricide !

(The angry multitude seize upon Syndercomb, who is
dragged from the hall, struggling violently.)

CROMWELL (to Thurlow).

Go you, and look to what they do with
him.

(Exit Thurlow.)

VOICE IN THE CROWD.

Strike down the traitor !

CROMWELL.

Brethren, I do pardon him. He knows
not what he does.

VOICES IN THE CROWD (without).
Into the water with him ! To the Thames !
(Enters Thurlow.)

THURLOW (to Cromwell):
The people are content. The Thames has
swallowed up the fiery apostle.

CROMWELL (aside).
Clemency, in sooth, is as effectual a means
as any other. 'T is one enemy the less. But
God forbid that this good people should
become accustomed to such deaths !

(A pause. Nothing can be heard save the joyous,
triumphant shouts of the crowd. Cromwell, seated
upon his throne, seems to be tranquilly enjoying the
delirious acclamations of the multitude and the
army.)

OVERTON (in an undertone to Milton).

A human victim immolated to the idol !
Everything is his, the army, and this fickle
people. Nothing doth he lack ! he has his
heart's desire. All our efforts have but served
to raise him to a higher pinnacle. In vain
we dare defy him ; in vain we dare contend
against him. For the nonce he can anni-
hilate us, one by one. He doth inspire love,
he doth inspire fear ; he should be satisfied.

CROMWELL (musing).

Ah ! when shall I be king ?

NOTES

¹ "Oui, dans le Croupion, il faisait Maigre-Échine."

Upon this passage the author made the following note :

"This ill-timed jest reproduces the spirit of the time and country. The Parliament was called the *Croupion* (the *Rump*). A Barebones was the Speaker, and *Barebones* signifies *Maigre-Échine*."

² Je suis son *porte-queue*, et toi, son *porte-voix*.

³ "The names of two swords renowned in the annals of the heroic days of chivalry: Durandal was Roland's sword, and Escalibar Esplandian's, if our memory is not at fault."—Author's note.

⁴ In French *olivier*, which is also the French form of *Oliver*.

⁵ *Les vases sont des cruches*. Cruche means a pitcher, also a stupid person, or blockhead.

EDITION DEFINITIVE

NOTE I

In the original manuscript, each act had a second title, as follows :

Act I.—THE CONSPIRATORS.—THE TAVERN.

Act II.—THE SPIES.—THE WINDOW.

Act III.—THE JESTERS.—THE BED.

Act IV.—THE SENTINEL.—THE POSTERN.

Act V.—THE WORKMEN.—THE THRONE.

NOTE II

CROMWELL was written in the autumn of 1826. The dates at which each act was begun and finished are thus indicated in the manuscript :

The first act begun August 6th, finished August 24th. The second act begun August 31st, finished September 20th. The third act begun September 22d, finished October 9th. The fourth act begun October 11th, finished October 25th. The fifth act begun October 28th ; the date on which it was finished is not indicated.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE TO CROMWELL

In 1826 Victor Hugo was twenty-four years old.

"At this time," says the author of *Victor Hugo Raconté*, "M. Taylor was royal commissioner at the Comédie Française. He asked M. Victor Hugo why he did not write for the stage.

" 'I am thinking of it,' said M. Victor Hugo. 'In fact, I have already begun a drama of which Cromwell is the subject.'

" 'Very good; finish it and give it to me. A Cromwell written by you can be played by none but Talma.'

"To give effect to his suggestion he brought the poet and the tragedian together at dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale*.

"It was quite a large party, but MM. Victor Hugo and Talma were seated side by side and could converse at their leisure.

"Talma was then sixty-five years old; he was weary and ill; he felt that he was nearing his end, and he did, in fact, die a few months later. He spoke bitterly of his profession; actors were not men, not even himself, despite his success and his reputation . . . Even in his profession he had achieved no satisfying result.

"M. Victor Hugo exclaimed at the thought.

" 'No,' insisted the great tragedian, 'the actor is nothing without a rôle, and I have never had a real rôle. I have never had such a play as I feel that I should have . . . No one knows what I might have been if I had found the author I sought. I shall die without having once really acted. You, Monsieur Hugo, are young and courageous; you ought to write a play for me. Taylor tells me that you are at work on a Cromwell. I have always longed to act Cromwell . . . What sort of a play is yours? It ought not to resemble the plays other men write.'

" 'The play that you dream of acting is precisely the one I dream of writing.'

He thereupon set forth, to Talma's delight, some of the ideas which he subsequently elaborated in the *Preface to Cromwell*.

"Talma listened with close attention to the poet's theories.

" 'And your *Cromwell* is written on those lines?' he asked.

" 'So much so that, in order to emphasize at the outset my purpose to cling to what is real, the first line is a date :

Demain vingt-cinq juin mil six cent cinquante-sept.

" 'You must know some of the scenes by heart,' said Talma. 'It would be very obliging on your part to repeat one to us.' "

Hugo recited the speech in which Milton appeals to Cromwell to renounce his purpose of accepting the crown, and followed it with the scene where the Protector questions Davenant concerning his journey.

"Talma loudly expressed his approval: 'Good! that's the way men really talk!' and when the scene was concluded he gave the author his hand, saying: 'Make haste and finish your drama. I long to play it.'

"Ere long Talma was dead. M. Victor Hugo, no longer having an actor awaiting him, did not hurry, but developed his drama to such an extent that its production became impossible."

It may be said here that the suggestion put forward by the author in the preface, that he might, if encouraged so to do, extract an acting version from the play as published, was never acted upon, and *Cromwell* has never appeared upon the stage. The manuscript was sold to M. Ambroise Dupont in the fall of 1826, and the author thereupon set about writing the preface.

"The preface, like the play itself, assumed enormous proportions. The volume, which might easily have been made into two, was printed very quickly and appeared in the early days of December, 1827.

"The effect of the drama was surpassed by that of the preface. It came like a declaration of war upon the universally accepted doctrines, and provoked a conflict of *feuilletons*.

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"The defense was no less spirited than the attack; the younger generation declared hotly in favor of the independence of the stage, and the *Preface to Cromwell* became their rallying-point."

As to the historical accuracy upon which the author prided himself, it should perhaps be said that his work must be viewed in the light of the statement that he makes somewhere in the preface to the effect that those incidents which are not founded upon fact *might have happened*. The crown was, of course, actually offered to Cromwell, in pursuance of a vote in Parliament upon the initiative of Alderman Paek, Sir Thomas Widdrington ("Mellifluous Widdrington"), being then Speaker of the House of Commons. The circumstances under which it was offered, and the motives which led Cromwell to decline it, have been variously estimated and commented upon by historians, according to their prejudices, if we may use the word.

Says Hume: "The difficulty consisted not so much in persuading Cromwell. He was sufficiently convinced of the solidity of these reasons" (urged by the committee), "and his inclination, as well as judgment, was entirely on the side of the committee. But how to bring over the soldiers to the same way of thinking, was the question. The office of king had been painted to them in such horrible colors, that there were no hopes of reconciling them suddenly to it, even though bestowed upon their general, to whom they were so much devoted."

"Suspended between these fears and his own most ardent desires, Cromwell protracted the time, and seemed still to oppose the reasonings of the committee; in hopes that by artifice he might be able to reconcile the refractory minds of the soldiers to his new dignity."

"While the protector argued thus so much in contradiction both to his judgment and inclination, it is no wonder that his elocution, *always confused, embarrassed and unintelligible*, should be involved in tenfold darkness, and discover no glimmering of common sense or reason. An exact account of this conference remains and may be regarded as a great curiosity . . .

"Upon the whole, Cromwell, after the agony and perplexity of long doubt, was at last obliged to refuse that crown which the representatives of the nation, in the most solemn manner, had tendered to him."

In his "Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, with Elucidations," Carlyle has dealt with this incident at considerable length.

"Readers know," he says, "what choking dust-whirlwind in certain portions of the 'Page of History,' this last business has given rise to! Dust-history, true to its nature, has treated this as one of the most important businesses in Oliver's Protectorate, though intrinsically it was to Oliver, and is to us, a mere 'feather in a man's cap,' throwing no new light on Oliver, and ought to be treated with great brevity indeed, had it not to many thrown much new darkness on him."

"The Speeches and Colloquies, reported by one knows not whom, upon this matter of the kingship, which extend from March to May of the year 1657, and were very private at the time, came out two years afterwards as a printed pamphlet, when kingship was once more the question, Charles Stuart's Kingship, and men needed incitements thereto. Of course it is with the learned law-arguments in favor of kingship that the pamphleteer is chiefly concerned; the words of Oliver, which again are our sole concern, have been left by him in a very accidental condition! Most accidental, often enough quite meaningless distracted condition; growing ever more distracted, as each new imaginary editor and unchecked printer, in succession, did his part to them. Till now in *Somers' Tracts*, which is our latest form of the business, they strike description silent! Chaos itself is Cosmos in comparison with that pamphlet in Somers. In or out of Bedlam, we can know well, gods or men never spake to one another in that manner! Oliver Cromwell's meaning is there; and that is *not* it. O Sluggardship, Imaginary-editorship, Flunkeyism, Human Platitude in general!—but we will complain of nothing. Know well, by experience of him, that Oliver Cromwell *always had a meaning and an honest manful meaning*; search well for that, after ten or twenty re-perusals you will find it even there. Those frightful jungles, trampled down for two centuries now by mere bisons and hoofed cattle, you will begin to see, *were* once a kind of regularly planted wood! Let the editor with all brevity struggle to indicate so much, candid readers doing their part along with him; and so leave it. A happier next generation will then be permitted to seek the aid of *fire*; and this immense business of the kingship, throwing little new light but also new darkness upon Oliver Protector, will then reduce itself to very small compass for his biographers."

On May 8, 1657, Cromwell at last definitely refused the crown in a speech quoted in full by Carlyle, and of which the conclusion is in these words:

"But truly this is my answer, that . . . I should not be an honest man if I did not tell you that I cannot accept of the government, nor undertake the trouble and charge of it—as to which I have a little more experimented than everybody what troubles and difficulties do befall men under such trusts and in such undertakings. I say I am persuaded to return this answer to you, that I cannot undertake this government with the title of king. And that is mine answer to this great and weighty business."

"And so," continues Carlyle, "*Exeunt* Widdrington and Parliament: 'Buzz, buzz! Distinct at last';—and the huge buzzing of the public mind falls silent, that of the kingship being now ended;—and this editor and his readers are delivered from a very considerable weariness of the flesh . . ."

"The 'great Lord Lambert,' hitherto a very important man" (having been dismissed from all employment, with a retiring pension of £2000, for his intriguing in this connection), "'now cultivated flowers at Wimbledon,' and in fact had at this point, to all reasonable intents, finished his public work in the world."

During Cromwell's ascendancy innumerable plots were formed against him, and men of all factions were at one time or another concerned in such plots. Carlyle relates that the conferences concerning the kingship were interrupted by a plot of the "Fifth Monarchy men," the result of which was that many of the plotters, including Harrison, were locked up. And we read in Hume that "Several persons, it is said, had entered into an engagement to murder the protector within a few hours after he should have accepted the offer of the Parliament."

One Miles Syndercomb formed a plot to burn Whitehall in January, 1657, and was seized and condemned to death, but poisoned himself in the Tower.

It may be said in general that nearly all of the many characters in the play represent actual historical personages, who played parts of greater or less prominence in the days of the Commonwealth, and who held, generally speaking, the opinions here attributed to them. It does not appear, however, that there was at any time a conspiracy in which these very diverse elements came together for a common end.

Early in 1658, there were grave fears of a foreign invasion in the interest of Charles Stuart, and at that time Royalist plotters were busy in England, while "Frantic Anabaptists, too, are awakening and the general English Hydra is rallying itself again, as if to try it one other last time."

In this connection the following passages from Carlyle are of interest:

"There is, in truth, need enough of unanimity at present. One of these days there came a man riding jogtrot through Stratford-at-the-Bow, with a green glazed cover over his hat, a nightcap under it and his valise behind him; a rustic-looking man; recognizable to *us*, amid the vanished populations who take no notice of him as he jogs along there, for the Duke of Ormond, Charles Stuart's head man! . . . He lodges now, 'with dyed hair' in a most disguised manner, 'at the house of a Papist Chirurgeon in Drury Lane;' communicating with the ring-leaders there.

"One day, in the early days of March next, his Highness said to Lord Broghill: 'An old friend of yours is in town, the Duke of Ormond, now lodged in Drury Lane, at the Papist Surgeon's there; you had 'better tell him to be gone!' Whereat his Lordship stared; found it a fact, however; and his Grace of Ormond did go with exemplary speed, and got again to Bruges and the Sacred Majesty, with report, that Cromwell had many enemies, but that the rise of the Royalists was moonshine."

It is probably the fact that the surname of Praise-God Barebone or Barebones, who gave his name to "Barebone's Parliament," was Barbone. It has been said that the extra *e* in the middle of the word was maliciously inserted by a certain historian of Royalist leanings.

Hugo on more than one occasion gratified his personal enmity by giving the name of the person who was offensive to him to some unattractive character in one of his plays. The Count of Belverana was a young Spanish nobleman with whom his brother Eugene had a quarrel, in which Victor became involved, while they were at college. He took his revenge by bestowing that title upon Gubetta, the confidential agent of Lucrezia Borgia.

"Another of his aversions was a hideous, tall, lanky fellow, with woolly hair and claw-like hands, awkward, unkempt, slovenly, bad-tempered, an incurable sluggard, who troubled his inkstand as little as his wash-basin, and was generally ridiculous. His name was *Elespuru*."

Victor Hugo Raconté, etc.



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